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THE BHAGAVAD GITA: AN OUTLINE

[VOLUME TWO]

T. L. VASWANI

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THE BHAGAVAD GITA: AN OUTLINE

Volume Two
[Chapters X-XVIII]

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IMPORTANT

Kindly note that this is a combined issue for the three months,—January, February and March, 1980.

Our next issue will be out in the month of April, 1980.

The current issue covers the last nine chapters of the Bhagavad Gita, thus completing the entire teaching of the Gita. Volume I of the outline was issued in December, 1978.

—The Manager

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CHAPTER X

The Divine Universe

[1]

In chapter X of the Gita, Krishna's revelation of Himself is continued. Krishna declares Himself to be the Source of all and, in knowing Him, we know all. Krishna is the All-in-all. This is the supreme word (*paramam vachah*) Krishna declares to Arjuna.

Krishna is at once Transcendent and Immanent. He is the Transcendent Source and the Birthless Origin of the Rishis (great sages) : and they know not His forthcoming or greatness.

> Hear again, O Arjuna, My supreme word. From a desire to do thee good, I will declare it to thee, for thou art My Beloved.
>
> Neither the hosts of gods nor the great sages know My origin : for all the gods and all the great sages come from Me.
>
> He who knoweth Me, the unborn, beginningless, the mighty Lord of all the worlds,—he among mortals is undeluded and is liberated from all sins. [X. 1 - 3]

The Vedas are dumb : the mind and breath are stilled : the sun and stars are speechless. As a child does not know the state of the mother, as waves do not know the sea, as water descended from the mountain cannot rise up, as the sea cannot be held by a wave nor the universe by an atom, so they know not who Krishna is, and how great!

"He was before all things," said St. Paul. He is "without birth" and "without beginning." He is the great Lord of the universe. To know Krishna thus is to be freed from sin.

Krishna is not only the Transcendent Source. He is, also, the Immanent Power.

Krishna is not only the Origin of the gods and the Rishis. From Krishna, too, come the qualities of the human mind.

In whatever state of being a man finds himself, whether pleasure or pain, exhileration or melancholy, fear or fearlessness, fame or ignominy, of that Krishna alone is the Dispenser. These and other dispositions of creatures are states that life draws from Krishna.

> Discernment, knowledge, non-illusion, forgiveness, truth, self-control and calmness, grief and joy, birth and death, fear and fearlessness,
>
> Harmlessness, peace no matter what befalls, contentment, the austere will, the wish to give, fame and ill-fame, —these different states of beings proceed from Me alone.
> [X. 4, 5]

From Krishna's nature and mind (*madhbhava manasa*), too, came (1) the seven great Rishis, (2) the ancient four, and (3) the fourteen Manus.

> The seven great sages, the ancient four, and also the Manus were born of My nature and mind; from them has sprung the race of mankind. [X. 6]

The seven great Rishis are the seers from Bhrigu to Vashishtha : they were the teachers of the traditional wisdom.

The ancient four were the four Kumaras, virgin youths :

they, too, were "mind-born." They were Sanata, Sanaka, Sanatana and Sanandana.

The Rishis, the Kumaras, and the Manus shaped the human race. They are His vehicles.

[2]

In this chapter, Krishna recounts to Arjuna some of His *vibhutis*, i.e., objects revealing (1) His lordship or power, and (2) His immanence in them. Krishna speaks of Himself (1) as the chief or Lord of each class, e.g., the sun among lights; and (2) as the immanent energy or *shakti:* each member of the class exists only through participation in that *shakti*, e.g., lights owe their possession of light to the sun.

> I am the Source of all; from Me the whole creation comes. Understanding thus, the wise worship Me with ecstatic devotion.
>
> Their thoughts are fixed on Me, their lives absorbed in Me, enlightening each other and ever speaking of Me, they are content and full of joy.
>
> To these, who ever dwell at one with Me and worship Me in Love, I give the yoga of discrimination, by which they come unto Me.
>
> Out of pure compassion for them, I dwell within their hearts, and dispel the darkness born of ignorance by wisdom's lamp which burneth bright. [X. 8-11]

Out of the knowledge of Krishna as the Transcendent Origin and Immanent Energy springs up devotion (*bhakti*) to the Lord. The *yogi*, knowing this, is absorbed in Krishna, and so is filled with joy. And in compassion, Krishna dwells in the heart of the *yogi* who has *bhakti*. Krishna takes into his heart the lamp of wisdom and destroys the darkness born of ignorance.

Arjuna wants to know Krishna's *vibhutis*, i.e., aspects of Krishna's immanence revealing His pervading powers or God-like revelation. Arjuna wants to know, as that would help his meditation. To know Krishna's *vibhutis* or immanental aspects would be a help to Arjuna in his meditation on Krishna.

> Verily, Thou Thyself dost know Thyself through Thy own Self. O Man Supreme, the Source of beings, the Lord of creatures, the God of gods, the Ruler of the world!
>
> Thou shouldst tell me, without reserve, of all Thy Forms divine, whereby, pervading these worlds, Thou dost abide (in them and still beyond).
>
> How may I know Thee, O Yogin, by constant meditation? In what aspects art Thou, O Blessed Lord, to be thought of by me ?
>
> Recount to me again and at length of Thy yogic power and glory; for I am never satiated with drinking the nectar of Thy speech. [X. 15-18]

[3]

Krishna proceeds to declare some of His *vibhutis* or divine glories. Every *vibhuti* is sprung from a part of Krishna's glory. And of every *vibhuti*, Krishna is the seed. There is no end of His *vibhutis* (glories). A few *vibhutis* are mentioned, by way of example or hint, of the Lord's infinite glory.

> So be it, Arjuna! I will declare to thee (some) of My forms divine, only those which are prominent; for there is no end to My extent. [X. 19]
>
> I am the Self, O Arjuna, seated in the hearts of all creatures. I am the beginning, the middle, and also the end of all beings. [X. 20]

Krishna is the Self enshrined in the heart of every creature. From Him all beings arise : by Him they live : and at His word they all depart and meet their final end.

> Among the Adityas I am Vishnu; among the lights (I am) the glorious Sun. I am Marichi of the Maruts; of the stars I am the Moon. [X. 21]

Adityas are the ancient Vedic gods of light. Vishnu is the chief of the Adityas.

Marichi is the chief of the Maruts, the gods of storm and blight.

> Of the Vedas I am the Sama Veda; of the gods I am Indra; of the senses I am the mind; and consciousness am I of living beings. [X. 22]

The Sama Veda is the most musical of the Vedas.

Indra is the god of the firmament. According to the Vedas, he stands in the first rank among the gods.

The mind is the lord of the senses. In Hindu psychology, the senses are controlled and governed by the mind (*manas*).

> Of the Rudras I am Shankara (Shiva) : of the Yakshas and the Rakshasas (I am) Kubera (the Lord of wealth); of the Vasus I am Agni (Fire); and of mountain-peaks I am Meru. [X. 23]

The Rudras are the spirits of storm and destruction.

The Yakshas are dwarfish imps with large bellies : they are benevolent demons, the Rakshasas being cruel.

Meru is the highest peak and is the abode of the gods.

> Among the household priests, O Arjuna, know Me to be the chief,— Brihaspati; among the (war) generals I am Skanda; among the lakes I am the Ocean. [X. 24]

Brihaspati is the high priest of the gods.

Skanda, the son of Shiva and Parvati, is the chief of heavenly warriors or generals.

> Of the great Rishis (sages) I am Bhrigu; of the

words I am the single syllable Om; of offerings I am the offering of *japa* (silent repetition or meditation); of immovable things I am the Himalaya. [X. 25]

Of all trees (I am) the Ashvattha; of divine Rishis (I am) Narada; of the gandharvas (I am) Chitraratha; and of the perfected ones (I am) the sage Kapila. [X. 26]

Ashvattha is the sacred banyan tree.

Narada, the great sage, is known for his music and his indifference to logic and philosophy as means to illumination.

Gandharvas are the celestial singers. Chitraratha is the chief celestial musician.

Of horses, know Me to be Uchchaishravas, born of nectar; of lordly elephants (I am) Airavata; and of men (I am) the Monarch. [X. 27]

Uchchaishravas is a celestial horse brought forth from the sea of nectar churned by the gods.

Airavata is Indra's elephant.

Of weapons I am the thunderbolt; of cows I am Kamadhuk, the Cow of Plenty; of progenitors I am Kandarpa, Creative Love; and of serpents I am Vasuki. [X. 28]

Of the Nagas I am Ananta; of those that dwell in the sea I am Varuna; of the *pitris* (departed ancestors) I am Aryaman; and of rulers I am Yama, the King of death. [X. 29]

Nagas are snakes with human heads. Their king is Ananta, also called Sesha, on whom Vishnu rests.

Varuna is the god of the sea.

Aryaman is the leader of the *pitris*, the departed ancestors.

Yama and his sister, Yami, are the first human pair. Yama, after death, went to the other world and became the law-giver, judge and governor of the dead. He is noted for his justice and impartiality and is called *Dharmaraja*.

> Of Daityas (Titans) I am Prahlada; among those that measure I am Time; of wild animals I am lord of beasts (the lion); and of birds (I am) the son of Vinata (Garuda). [X. 30]

Daityas are demons or giants, semi-human beings. Prahlada,— one of the greatest devotees of the Lord,— was born amongst them.

Garuda is Vishnu's eagle. Vishnu's vehicle. Garuda is the king of birds and is represented as half-man, half-bird.

> Of purifiers I am the wind; and among warriors I am Rama; of fishes I am Makara; and among rivers I am the Ganges. [X. 31]

Makara is crocodile, shark or whale.

The Ganges is regarded as the most sacred of streams.

> I am the beginning, the end and also the middle of all that is, O Arjuna. Of the sciences I am the science of the Self; and I am the logic of those who (rightly) reason (or debate). [X. 32]
>
> Of letters I am the letter "A", and of all compounds (I am) the dual. I also am everlasting time, and I the Creator whose face turns everywhere. [X. 33]

"A" is the first letter of the alphabet.

The dual is the copulative compound,— compound form of Sanskrit words. Thus "Ramalakshman" is a dual. This co-ordination of parts makes this form superior to others.

Krishna is the endless Life, the un-ageing, everlasting Time. He is the Lord of Time and periods of Time.

I am Death that destroys all; and (I am) the Source of things that are yet to be. Of feminine qualities (I am) fame, fortune, speech, memory, intelligence, firmness, and patient forgiveness. [X. 34]

Of hymns (I am) Brihatsaman; of metres (I am) Gayatri; of months (I am) Margashirsha; and of seasons (I am) the flower-laden spring. [X. 35]

The Brihatsaman is one of the great hymns of the Vedas.

The Gayatri is a sacred verse of the Rig Veda.

Margashirsha (November-December) is regarded as a sacred month.

I am the gambler's cunning skill; the splendour of all splendid things am I; success am I; resolve am I; and I am the goodness of the good. [X. 36]

Of the Vrishnis I am Vasudeva; of the Pandavas I am Dhananjaya (Arjuna); of the sages I am Vyasa; and of poets (I am) Ushana the poet. [X. 37]

Vrishnis are the descendents of Vrishni,— son of Yadu and great-grandfather of Vasudeva.

Arjuna is called Dhananjaya, which means, "winner of wealth."

Ushana was a great poet and sage.

I am the Sceptre of those who rule; of those that seek victory I am the Statesmanship; of hidden mysteries I am the Silence; and of the men who know I am the Wisdom. [X. 38]

And know, O Arjuna, that I am the Seed of all beings. Nor is there anything, moving or unmoving, that can exist without Me. [X. 39]

There is no end to My divine manifestations, O Arjuna.

> What has been spoken by Me is only illustrative of My infinite glory. [X. 40]
>
> Whatsoever being there is, endowed with glory and beauty and strength, know that to have sprung from a fraction of My splendour. [X. 41]
>
> But of what use to thee, O Arjuna, is this detailed knowledge ? I sustain this whole universe, pervading it with but one fragment of Myself : and I abide ! [X. 42]

Krishna has ennumerated some of His endless divine manifestations (*vibhutis*) in the manifold phenomena, functions, actions and forms of creatures and beings. And after His long list of examples, Krishna sums up the whole lesson :— "This whole universe is but one fragment of Myself, its Origin and Support : and I abide !"

Krishna pervades the whole universe with one fragment of Himself. Whatever is good and true and powerful and beautiful is but a fragment of that Fragment of Krishna's splendour, glory (*tejas*). No manifestation and no series of manifestations can exhaust Krishna : all manifestations but dimly reflect a single portion of the Lord.

A single portion is the universe,— but of the Lord. So seen, the universe becomes a divine appearance. So Krishna suggests how we may lift up life from a worldly plane to a spiritual height by trying to see God in the world. Do you see nature ? Behold in its wonders the glory of God ! Do you look into the mystery of your body and the marvels of your consciousness ? Behold in them the glory of God ! So may you see, also, the glory of God in the endless procession of great heroes and sages of history, of nations and civilisations stretching back into centuries and ages. The manifestations of the universe disclose the majesty of God. Krishna's glory and beauty, Krishna's power and splendour, Krishna's wisdom and goodness, Krishna's care and love flow in from every side.

To know this, to see this vision, is to become a *bhakta* of the Lord and to fall in reverence at His Feet. And into the heart of His *bhakta*, Krishna enters and gives him the power to understand and the grace of *gnana*. Krishna dispels His *bhakta's* fear and ignorance. Krishna fills His devotee's life with illumination and effulgence of glory.

CHAPTER XI

Krishna's Transfiguration

[1]

Arjuna is glad that his *moha*, delusion, has now been dispersed. Krishna's word of the supreme secret,— that He, Krishna, is the Incarnate One, one with Brahman, and immanent in all creation,— has given peace to Arjuna. He is no longer perplexed. Arjuna says :—

> In Thy mercy Thou hast unfolded to me the supreme secret concerning the Self, and Thy words have dispelled my delusion.
>
> I have heard in full from Thee, O Krishna, of the birth and passing of beings, and also of Thy imperishable glory.
>
> Thou art, O Lord Supreme, as Thou dost say Thou art. Yet I desire to see Thy divine form, O *Purushottama* (Person Supreme) !
>
> If Thou thinkest, O Lord, that by me It can be seen, then reveal to me, O Lord of Yoga (Krishna), Thine Imperishable Self. [XI. 1-4]

Arjuna has heard from the divine lips of the imperishable glory of Krishna. Unto Arjuna hath Krishna told of the origin and dissolution, the birth and passing of all things. Arjuna's ears have heard of Krishna's creative functions. But to see is more convincing than to hear. So Arjuna requests of Krishna,— the *Yogeshwara*, the Lord of Yoga, of yogic powers,— the boon of a vision of His divine form, His Imperishable Self. Arjuna wishes to see the sovereign form of Krishna as the *Parameshvaram* and the *Purushottama*,—as the Supreme Lord and the Supreme Person.

Krishna replies that His forms are manifold, various in colours and shapes, reflecting the infinite variety of created beings. These forms are from the highest gods (Adityas, — sun spirits; Vasus; Rudras,— storm-spirits; Ashvins,— gods of healing, physicians and helpers in time of need; and the Maruts) to the lower forms,— marvels,— of created things.

But the Form of Krishna which He presents to the sight of Arjuna contains all these manifold forms. The Form Krishna wishes to reveal to Arjuna is the Form in which Arjuna may see the whole universe, animate and inanimate, gathered and embodied in Himself,— the whole cosmos, movable and immovable, standing in one, concentrated, in Krishna's Body.

> Behold, O Arjuna, My forms by hundreds and by thousands, various in kind, divine, of innumerable colours and shapes.
>
> Behold the Adityas, the Vasus, the Rudras, the two Ashvins, and the Maruts. Behold, O Arjuna, many marvels never seen before.
>
> Behold here today, O Arjuna, the whole universe with all things that move and move not, and whatever else thou desirest to see,— all concentrated in My Body.
>
> [XI. 5-7]

But such a vision of Krishna's divine Form is impossible with the natural human eye. So Krishna gives to Arjuna the "divine eye" (*divyam chakshuh*). One is reminded of the words of the Jewish prophet for his servant :— "Lord, open his eyes that he may see !" The "divine eye" is the eye of the seer, the mystic, who sees with the inner sight.

> But, verily, thou canst not behold Me with these Thine (mortal) eyes; (so) I give unto thee the divine eye. Behold My sovereign Yoga (divine power and glory).
> [XI. 8]

[2]

Arjuna is now asked to see in Krishna the vision of the divine Form. Krishna is transfigured. In Krishna is seen the whole universe centred. Arjuna's privilege it is to see the vision.

The vision of Krishna in His supreme Form is that of the Divine Being of innumerable mouths and eyes, with many divine ornaments and many divine (symbolic) weapons and divine necklaces (garlands), and vestures anointed with divine ointments.

It was the vision of Krishna as the Eternal God, the God all-marvellous, boundless in His universal presence (with face turned everywhere).

> With myriad mouths and eyes, with myriad visions of marvel, with myriad divine ornaments and countless godly weapons all upraised ;
>
> Wearing celestial garlands and vestures, anointed with heavenly perfumes, full of all marvels, resplendent, boundless, with face turned everywhere.
>
> Could but a thousand suns blaze forth all at once in the sky, it would be like the splendour of that exalted Being.
> [XI. 10-12]

The brightness of His glory was as the splendour of a thousand suns blazing out together in the sky.

With the divine eye alone could Arjuna gaze into such infinite glory. And beholding, he saw, within the body of the transfigured Krishna,—the God of gods,—the whole universe in all its manifold varieties.

> There did Arjuna behold the whole universe, with its manifold divisions blended into one, in the body of the God of gods. [XI. 13]

This ecstatic vision inspires awe and reverence in Arjuna. And he bows down his head to the Divine Being. Then, with hands folded in reverence, Arjuna says :—

> Yea ! now I see how all is wrapt in Thee !
> The gods are in Thy glorious frame, O Lord !
> Brahma upon his lotus - throne, and all
> The sages and the Serpent Powers divine !
> [XI. 15]

Arjuna describes what he beholds in this divine vision,—the Body of Krishna containing all the gods and all beings and all things of every kind. Arjuna beholds Brahma, sitting on the lotus issuing from Vishnu's navel, and the Rishis and the divine Serpents, the masters of wisdom, the divine teachers of the wise on the earth.

> Thou Lord of all ! I see Thy arms and breasts,
> Thy faces and Thine eyes on every side,
> In Form diversified, yet I see not
> Thy centre nor beginning nor Thy end !
> [XI. 16]

Arjuna sees Krishna as the Form, the Infinite-Universal Form of the Infinite Lord, the Form of Infinite forms,—each form with its own mouths, eyes, arms and breasts. And in this kaleidoscopic vision of the divine Form, Krishna appears as "without beginning, middle or end." Yet all forms are bound up in His own divine Form.

> I see Thee with Thy discus, crown and mace :
> I see Thee glowing everywhere as mass
> Of light : with blazing brilliance as the fire
> That flames, as glowing sun on every side !
>
> [XI. 17]

Arjuna beholds Krishna's diadem (a symbol of His sovereignty) and mace and discus (the sacred wheels within wheels). The discus revolves as discus of blazing fire, illumining the sky to immeasurable distance : this indicates His Omnipresence. He is the Source of life and evolution.

> Thou art the *aksharam*,— the One Supreme :
> Thou art the resting-place of all this world :
> Thou art the Undying Guardian of the Law :
> Thou art, I hold, the Immemorial Man !
>
> [XI .18]

And Krishna is the supreme Truth (*aksharam*, imperishable). He is the supreme Treasure-house,— the focus, — of the world's plan. He is the changeless Guardian of Eternal *Dharma* (Law). He is the Immemorial Man (the Primal Person).

> I see Thee, Lord ! as one who hath no source,
> Nor midst, nor end. I see Thee as the Might
> Supreme. Unnumbered arms be Thine : the sun
> And moon Thine eyes : Thy Face a flaming Fire !
>
> [XI. 19]

Nor beginning, nor midst, nor end hath He. He is the Endless Force. The sun and the moon are His eyes. And He hath unnumbered arms,—a sign of His omnipotence. And His face is as Sacrificial Fire blazing, warming the worlds with its radiance and splendour.

> This space from bound to bound, from pole to pole.
> Is full of Thee alone : all space is full !
> At sight of this, Thy awful, wonder-form,
> The triple worlds sink down, O Mighty One !
>
> [XI. 20]

He filleth the earth and heavens and all the interspaces stretched between. And before His awful Form, the three worlds tremble !

> Yon hosts of gods draw nigh and merge in Thee :
> They fold their hands in fear, invoking Thee !
> The Rishis and the Siddhas cry :— "Hail ! Hail !"
> And sing the hymn of glory unto Thee !
>
> [XI. 21]

The hosts of the gods and great sages (*maharishis*) and perfected ones (*siddhas*) are drawn within Him and worship Him, chanting His praises with songs, and invoking Him with *"svasti,"* "all hail !" and conveying to the whole universe the blessings of His glory !

> The Rudras and Adityas, Vasus, too,
> The Sadhyas, Siddhas, Vishvas, Ushmapas,
> The Maruts, Ashvins, Yakshas, Asuras,
> And Gandharvas,— all gaze at Thee in awe !
>
> [XI. 22]

Rudras (gods of terror), Vasus (gods of wealth), Sadhyas (gods of the intermediate regions between heaven and earth), Adityas (suns), Vishvas (spirits of endurance), Maruts (spirits of air). Ushmapas (heat-drinkers), Gandharvas (angels), Yakshas (spirits of wealth), Asuras (dark spirits),— all, all behold Him, astonished !

> Thy mighty Form of many mouths and eyes,

Of things and feet innumerate, and arms
So vast, and countless bosoms, countless teeth,
The worlds behold and tremble, so do I !
I mark Thee touch the skies, ablaze with hues,
Thy mouth wide opened and Thine eyes aglow:
When I behold Thee thus, my inmost heart
Doth quake, my strength is fled, I find no peace !
O, fierce as Time's devouring flames, I see
Thy mouths with frightful tusks ! Ah me ! I lose
All sense of where I am : I find no peace !
Have mercy, Lord ! O Refuge of the worlds !

[XI. 23-25]

The worlds see terror-struck His terrible teeth : they betoken His Power of destruction. He touches the heavens radiant. He is rainbow-hued and has shining eyes. But His "dreadful teeth" dry up strength and peace. They are like the Fire of Doom which consumes the world at the time of *pralaya* (dissolution).

As He is, in His supreme attributes, the embodiment of Perfect Love, so His terrible teeth reveal His sternness as Law, the Inexorable Law of Karma.

Into thy gaping mouths, tremendous toothed
And terrible to see, they hurrying rush,—
All sons of Dhritarashtra and, with them,
The hosts of kings and Bhishma, Karna, Dron,
And all the noblest warriors of our hosts,
Some caught between the teeth are seen with heads
All mangled, crushed and ground to dust and death
Between Thy jaws they lie,— the best of both !
As many river-floods do rush to sink
Into the sea, so do these mighty men,
These heroes great, rush to Thy flaming mouths !
Swift, in unending streams and lose themselves !
As moths which swiftly flutter to a light,—

A blazing fire,— to meet their doom, so do
These men, with headlong speed, rush in to meet
Their doom of death within Thy flaming mouths !
On every side, with fiery, flaming mouths,
Thou lickest up the worlds, devouring all :
Thy blazing rays, O Vishnu, still do fill
The earth from end to end : the world doth burn !
[XI. 26-30]

Revolving in the wheels of Time, the mighty men of the earth are caught between His teeth in the Law of Karma. The Kauravas, the hosts of kings, Bhishma, Drona and Karna and chief warriors rush into Krishna's tremendous teeth.

As the rapid streams of full-flowing rivers roll on to sink into the sea, so haste these mighty men of the earth to rush into His flaming mouths.

As moths draw, in rapid course, to the flame of fire, and find death, so do the warriors, heroes, kings, lords of kingdoms and dominions, pour into His mouths to their own dissolution, caught between His teeth, their heads to powder crushed.

So does He lick up all the worlds around, devouring them with flaming mouths. His glory filleth the worlds. The universe burneth with His blazing rays.

Ah Vishnu! tell me who Thou art : why is
Thy Form so full of awe ? I worship Thee :
Have mercy, God Supreme ! I wish to know
Thee, Primal One ! For I know not Thy ways !
[XI. 31]

Arjuna is bewildered. Arjuna does not understand the Lord's ways when he sees the warriors and heroes and kings rushing to destruction in His mouths. Arjuna does obeisance to the Terrible Form but begs Krishna to be gracious and to tell him of His own Inner Essence.

Arjuna has, through the occult vision granted him by the Lord, seen the universe in one flash of frightful immensity. And Arjuna is frightened. How natural the desire to see God, to have a vision,—a vivid picture,—of the universe! But who can see God and live?

Arjuna sees the Infinite God on all sides, with myriad faces and eyes, with infinite arms and strength, shining as fire, yet consuming the worlds. Arjuna sees, in the One Figure of the Lord, the hosts of gods and angels, men and animals, suns and stars, things and beings. As moths rush headlong into a blazing fire, so sees he the great ones of the earth rushing into a vortex of world-destroying force. He sees life and death locked up in one awful embrace.

Arjuna is amazed : Arjuna is awe-struck : Arjuna is frightened. His hair stands on end, his limbs tremble, his mind is confounded, he falls prostrate, imploring mercy. "O tell me, Lord, to what goal Divine such fearful visions tend! Is there a purpose, Lord, in this dreadful activity of destruction and death?"

[3]

Krishna explains what is the purpose underlying the dreadful activity of destruction and death. Krishna says:—

> Lo, Time am I, world-wrecker Time am I !
> The Slayer Time, now ready for the hour
> That ripens to the ruin of all these hosts :
> E'en if thou flee, all these shall cease to be !
>
> [XI. 32]

"I am *Kala*," says Krishna, "I am Time. I am Doom come forth to destroy the worlds,—and the warriors fighting at the Kurukshetra."

In Krishna's Abode, free from the conditions and limitations of matter, there is no "Time." But in this desolate world,—the broken world of matter and corruption,—"Time" has come into being, and is marked by variation of the earth's relation to the sun and moon and so are made days and nights, weeks and months, years and seasons. And because "Time" has come into being, we also see "life" and "death" as transitory conditions of the earth's existence.

And Krishna has supreme authority over "Time", over life and death. Life and death, limited by time-periods, are in Krishna's mind, pre-ordained, pre-destined. So apart from Arjuna,—without Arjuna's action even,—the warriors drawn up in ranks opposing shall not survive. Even if Arjuna fails and flees, the Kuru warriors will not survive. Krishna is the active slayer of these men. Krishna has slain them already.

> Arise thou, then! Obtain renown! Fight thou
> Thy foes! The kingdom awaits thee. By Me,—
> Not thee,—they all are slain : seem thou to slay!
> Be thou My instrument! But strike, O knight!
> Strike thou at Drona! And at Bhishma strike!
> At Karna, too, and Jayadratha,—all
> The warriors here : know I do bid them die!
> Be not afraid ! Fight thou and slay the slain !
> [XI. 33, 34]

Therefore Krishna asks Arjuna to "stand up and fight!" Arjuna has to be only the immediate agent, a mere instrument (*nimittamatram*). Arjuna has to be no more than a means. Drona and Bhishma and Jayadratha and Karna and all the other warriors are already doomed! Arjuna has only to arise, fight and slay the slain, conquer the already conquered.

[4]

Having heard these words of Krishna, Arjuna prostrates himself and bursts into an ecstatic hymn of praise. Before

Krishna the whole universe, says Arjuna, stands in joy and love. While the *Rakshasas*,—dark forces, demons and evil spirits,—terrified, flee away in fear, the saints and sages and the gods bow down in homage before Him. For is not Krishna greater than Brahma? Is not Krishna the God of gods? Is He not the Home of the universe? Are not the motions and revolutions of all things to Him and from Him? He is *Sat* and *asat*,—*Sat*, the Eternal; and *asat*, all things. He is *Tat Param*, That, Supreme. He is the Eternal Man. He is the Treasure-House, the Supreme Receptacle,—Repository,—of all that lives. He is the Truth, the All-knower : He is, also, the All-known. He is the Supreme Abode. In His Form is the universe spread. And from Him are projected all phenomena,—Vayu (wind), Yama (death), Agni (fire), Moon, Varuna (water), Prajapati.

Arjuna thus sees the Lord in another aspect,—full of love and beauty, as the Father of the universe, as Teacher, Friend and Beloved of all, as Infinite Love, as Eternal Beauty, as Imperishable Truth, as Undying Life. Thus Arjuna's Names of Krishna culminate in the ecstatic exclamation :—"O All! Thou art All!"

O Krishna! rightly doth the world delight
In Thy surpassing pow'r and sing to Thee!
The Rakshasas in dread, at sight of Thee,
Do flee : and hosts of Siddhas bow to thee !
And how should they not do Thee homage, Lord !
O Thou, Exalted One! Than Brahma great,
The first creator, art yet greater Thou !
Thou God of gods ! Infinite Lord! Aught, naught,—
The Being and non-being, and what is beyond
The two,—Transcendent *That*,—the One Supreme !
Thou art the first of gods : th' Eternal Man
Thou art : in Thee the cosmos safe abides!
The knower and the known,—the twain in One

Art Thou ! Our Goal Supreme : in Thee is all!
O Thou art Vayu, wind ! And Thou art Yam,
Death! Agni (fire), and Waves art Thou ! And Thou
The Moon! Prajapati art Thou,—the Sire
Of all ! A thousand times be hail to Thee !
All hail to Thee in front, behind ! And hail
On every side ! O All! In pow'r and strength,
O Boundless One ! Alone, Thou roundest all :
Thou One in all and, therefore, Thou art All!
[XI. 36-40]

Arjuna, recognising now the Supreme Glory of Krishna,—on earth his familiar friend,—begs His forgiveness for his ignorant familiarity and want of respect in the many close and intimate relations he has enjoyed with Him.

Sometimes, in rashness, did I speak to Thee :
I thought of Thee my "friend" and, unaware
Of this Thy greatness, called Thee "Krishna!" "Prince!"
Or "Comrade!" Out of fondness or at play,
Or on the bed or seated or at meals,
Alone or in the throng, I did Thee wrong,
O Sinless One ! For this I pray to Thee :—
"Forgive ! forgive my faults ! Eternal Lord !"
For now I know Thou art the Father great
Of all below, of all above, of all
The worlds within ! The Guru, Teacher Thou,
Adorable as no one else in all
The worlds : there is none equal unto Thee !
How then could any one in all the worlds
Be greater than Thy glory past compare?
Thou art the Highest, Lord, I worship Thee !
With body bent and reverent, I bow
And seek Thy grace, O Lord adorable!
As father with the son, as friend with friend,
As lover with beloved, bear with me! [XI. 41-44]

Arjuna now calls Krishna "Father of the worlds" and as "greater, weightier than any Guru." Arjuna craves His grace. And Arjuna implores Krishna to "bear with him as father with the son, as friend with friend, as lover with the beloved."

> I have seen That which none hath seen before,—
> The marvel of Thy form! My heart is glad.
> Yet filled with fear! O Lord of Gods! Retake
> Thine earthly shape which earthly eyes may bear!
> [XI. 45]

Arjuna's heart is thrilled for he "hath seen That which none hath seen before." Yet is there fear in his mind, and so Arjuna asks Krishna to show him His human Form again.

> I wish to see Thee even as before,
> Arrayed with crown and mace and disc in hand,
> O Thousand-armed, of Universal Form,
> Assume Thy four-armed shape in Vishnu's guise!
> [XI. 46]

Krishna removes Arjuna's self-reproach and points out how Arjuna has beheld the divine Form which never before was seen by another human in that supreme aspect in which Arjuna hath behold Him. No *yagna*, no Vedic study, no alms, no merit of works, no ascetic austerity, no mortification of the flesh, can win the vision of Krishna's Supreme Divine Form. By Krishna's Love and Grace hath Arjuna beheld the Form Divine.

> Yea! thou hast seen, Arjuna! by My grace,
> Through Yoga-pow'r, My Form Supreme, so vast
> And wonderful, so radiant, endless, first,
> And penetrating all,—which none but thee
> Hath seen before! For neither Vedas, Prince!
> Nor sacrifice, nor alms, nor rites, nor psalms,
> Nor penance long can win with world of men

This vision which was kept for thee alone!
Be not bewildered! Be thou not afraid,
Because thou hast beheld this awful Form!
Be free from fear! Be glad at heart! Behold
Again this long familiar Form of Mine!

[XI. 47-49]

Having thus allayed Arjuna's fears and brought happiness to his heart, Krishna resumes His gentle human form. Arjuna is reassured. He is no longer terrified. "I am now collected," he says, "and restored to my nature."

> Once more I see Thy gentle human Form, O Krishna, and my mind is now composed, and I am restored to my own nature.
>
> [XI. 51]

[5]

Krishna now proceeds to instruct Arjuna in the method by which a man may know and see the Lord in His Divine Form.

The method of Krishna is different from what so many would expect. So many think that severe self-mortification, physical torture, subtle psychic and magical performances will crush the flesh,—the material and sensual nature,—and enable them to transcend matter and win the vision of the Divine Form. Krishna gives a warning. Not Vedic study, nor austerity nor gifts, nor rituals, can win the gods or men the vision of the Divine Form.

> Hard, indeed, it is to see this Form of Mine which thou hast beheld. The very gods yearn to see this Form.
>
> Yet not by the Vedas, nor by austerities, nor by gifts, nor by sacrifices, can I be seen in the Form in which thou hast seen Me.
>
> But by devotion to Me alone,—devotion undivided,—may I thus be known and seen in essence, and entered into, O Arjuna!

> Who doeth work for Me, who maketh Me his supreme goal,—he, My devotee, freed from attachment, without ill-will towards any creature, he cometh unto Me, O Arjuna! [XI. 52-55]

So let not a man crave for abnormal powers. The Great Illumination is not there. Powers may be given him without his asking for them. They may come to him when he is found fit by the Lord to use them in His service. Powers come unsought. A man's duty is to dedicate his life in love and devotion to God and to do God's work. Make God the Goal of your life and give your love to all, without ill-feeling towards any. Then are you on the path which will lead you to the Lord.

So Krishna teaches that the way to a vision of the Divine Form,—and the Divine Knowledge and Supreme Wisdom,—is "devotion to Me alone."

Sri Shankar Acharya rightly calls this last *sloka* (No. 55) "the essence of the whole Gita."

CHAPTER XII

The Path of Devotion

[1]

Krishna is one with the Supreme Brahman, the Imperishable, the Unmanifested, the Formless Absolute. Krishna is, also, the Immanent Lord. Which is better, Arjuna asks, to worship Krishna with *bhakti* as the Lord, or to concentrate on the Unmanifest?

In the worship of Krishna, there is (1) *bhakti* or devotion, and (2) *seva* or work offered to the Lord. But in the worship of the Unmanifest, there is not *bhakti* but contemplation of the Unmanifest, and work or *seva* is not regarded. In the former there is *upasna* : in the latter there is contemplation. Which of the two is the better way of attainment?

This question arises in Arjuna's mind, in contemplation of the vision of the Divine Form and the resumption of His human Form by Krishna. The Supreme is the Unmanifested, the One without a second. The Supreme, too, is the manifested Krishna. Which is the better course for an aspirant,— to contemplate the Unmanifest or to serve and love the manifested Krishna?

> Those devotees who, ever harmonised, worship Thee, and those again who worship the Indestructible, the Unmanifested,— of these, who is the more learned in yoga? [XII. 1]

Krishna says that both the methods are efficient, and they who contemplate the Unmanifested reach Krishna, too. But man is an embodied being, a part of the divine manifestation : so he finds that the Unmanifested is incomprehensible to him.

Therefore man is benefitted better by fixing his mind on God's manifested aspect. It is easier and more useful to man to realise the manifest God in Krishna than to realise God as an abstraction, as Unknown, Unknowable. Attainment of the manifested Krishna is easier than the attainment of the Unmanifested Absolute.

> They who fixing their minds on Me, worship Me, ever harmonised and endowed with faith Supreme,— them do I hold as the best *yogis*.
>
> They who worship the Indestructible, the Indefinable, the Unmanifested, the Omnipresent, the Unthinkable, the Unchanging, the Immutable, the Constant,—
>
> (They who worship thus), restraining their senses, regarding everything equally, rejoicing in the welfare of all beings,— they also come unto Me.
>
> Greater is the toil of those whose minds are set on the Unmanifested; for the path of the Unmanifested is hard for the embodied to attain. [XII. 2-5]

For men with bodies, it is difficult to reach the Absolute. They who offer all actions to Krishna and hold Him dear, meditating on Him, they are speedily delivered from rebirth. So Krishna asks Arjuna to choose the path of *bhakti* or devotion.

> Those who consecrate all their actions to Me, regard-

ing Me as the supreme Goal, and who, with single-hearted devotion, worship Me and meditate on Me,

These, O Arjuna, I swiftly deliver from the ocean of death and lives (that end in death), their minds being ever set on Me. [XII. 6, 7]

[2]

Krishna indicates graded practices of *bhakti* (devotion).

(1) "On Me alone fix thy mind and let thy understanding dwell in Me!"

Steady concentration of mind and *buddhi* on Krishna,— this is the best. Concentrate on the Lord, even in the midst of worldly activities, *Manas* and *buddhi*, mind and understanding,— fix them both on the Lord. Abide in this constant realisation of the presence of Krishna.

(2) "By the yoga of constant practice, seek to reach Me!"

Think of Krishna,— if not without interruption,— again and again. The first refers to a state of constant realisation or *samadhi* which not many may be equal to, all at once. Let such devotees take to "graded practices" (*abhyasa yoga*). *Samadhi* is steady : *abhyasa* involves repetition. By constant practice of meditation they will attain, one day, to the Lord.

(3) "Be intent on My service!"

If you cannot do *samadhi* nor graded practices of concentration, offer all work as sacrifice to Krishna. Make work for the Lord your aim. Perform all actions for Him. Place all your life and deeds in sacrifice and offering to Him. Give up selfish activities and worldly ambitions : they bind to material cares. Be a man of renunciation, a dedicated soul. In every act, seek to serve the Lord. Your service will be worship to Him.

(4) "Renounce all fruit of action!"

If being intent on the Lord's service be hard for you, give up desire for fruit of work. Work without desire! By all means, work for yourself and your family : but do not be anxious about the results. Trust in God. Believe that all will be well, for you live under the protection of an all-loving Father! Be self-restrained (*atmavan*) and place all your actions,— successes and failures alike,— in Krishna, abandoning to Him the fruit of every action. Do your duty : don't worry about the results. Accept, in truthfulness, all results as God-sent.

> On Me alone fix thy mind and let thy understanding dwell in Me. And without doubt thou shalt live hereafter in Me alone.
>
> But if thou art not able firmly to fix thy mind on Me, then seek to reach Me, O Arjuna, by the yoga of constant practice (of concentration).
>
> If thou art unable even to practise (concentration), then be intent on My service. Perform actions for My sake, and thou shalt attain perfection.
>
> If even to do this thou hast not the strength, then renounce all fruit of action, seeking refuge in devotion to Me, holding thyself in control. [XII. 8-11]

[3]

Krishna emphasises *bhakti* or devotion or love in contrast with the colder forms of approach to the Supreme. Constant practice (*abhyasa*) leads to knowledge (*gnana*). But better than knowledge is *dhyana* or meditation or communion with the Self, the *Atman* within. Yet better even than this meditation is loving renunciation of all fruit of work at the Feet of Krishna. *Abhyasa*, intellectual *gnana*, and *dhyana* or self-communion,— each has its place in spiritual life. But better than these three is the offering of all work to the Lord. In this offering is the secret of the dedicated life. And out of dedication, springing from devotion to Krishna, cometh serenity, peace.

> Better, indeed, is knowledge than constant practice (of concentration); meditation is better than knowledge; better than meditation is renunciation of the fruit of action; on renunciation follows peace. [XII. 12]

[4]

Krishna proceeds to give an outline of the character and blessedness of him who follows the Lord in the path of devotion.

Krishna's beloved devotee has his all in Krishna's love. He accepts everything as Krishna-sent.

Therefore he does not hate any being : he bears no ill-will to any. He is friendly to all : he is compassionate. He is without a thought of "I" or "mine." He is calm, come pleasure or pain. He has dedicated his mind and understanding to the Lord.

> He who beareth no ill-will to any being, is friendly and compassionate, free from egoism and self-sense, in pain and pleasure has poised mind, is forgiving;
>
> The yogi who is ever content, ever in harmony and master of himself, resolute, with mind and understanding dedicated to Me,— he, My devotee, is My beloved.
> [XII. 13, 14]

He is not a world-disturber,— like so many of the earth's "great men,"— and the world does not disturb him. He realises that the *Atman* is superior to what the world may give or take away : and so in all mortal changes and chances, he is proof against joy, impatience and fear,— against worldly emotions and desires.

> He by whom the world is not disturbed and who is not disturbed by the world, who is freed from the agitations of joy and anger and fear,— he is My beloved. [XII. 15]

He is ambition-less : he wants nothing and has no expectation. He is pure. He is an adept, an expert, in doing right things, being prompt in decisions in emergencies. He renounces to the Lord the fruit of every *arambha* (enterprise or undertaking), and so has no fear of future. He craves for nothing : he grieves at nothing. The Lord is a loving Father : the *bhakta* (devotee) has made his life an offering to the Lord. Why should the *bhakta* be worried?

> He who is ambition-less, is pure, skilful in action, is passionless and free from fear, he who renounces the fruit of every undertaking to Me,— he, My *bhakta* (devotee), is My beloved.
>
> He who neither rejoiceth nor hateth nor grieveth nor craveth, he who renounceth good and ill,— he, My devout worshipper, is My beloved. [XII. 16, 17]

He is alike in praise and dispraise, in honour and disgrace, in fame and ignominy. He is satisfied with whatever the Lord is pleased to grant him. He is at peace with the world around him. He is at peace within himself. He is *mauni*, silent. He is *aniketah*, homeless. He realises that the world is not his home : his Home is Krishna ! So he stands calm and smiling in all situations of life.

> Alike to foe and friend, alike in fame and ignominy, alike in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain, freed from attachment,
>
> Taking equally praise and blame, silent, content with what cometh, homeless, of steady mind,— he, My devout worshipper, is My beloved. [XII. 18, 19]

And the true *bhakta* worships the Holy Law of Blessedness,— as declared by Krishna. It is the Law that leads to the Immortal Goal, i.e., to Krishna. In the Lord is the *bhakta's* fullest faith. He believes in Krishna as the Supreme.

> They, verily, who worship this *dharma* (law) of immortality, as taught herein, and, endowed with faith, believe in Me as the Supreme,— they, My *bhaktas*, are My beloved. [XII. 20]

CHAPTER XIII

Philosophy Of Life

[1]

Krishna expounds a philosophy of life on which, as on a rock, Arjuna may build his destiny. We all need a philosophy of life which may help us in our quest after the Perfect Life.

And first, it is necessary to understand the dual nature,— of Man and the Universe. This dual nature is,— *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. *Prakriti* is matter or body : it is referred to as the "field" (*kshetram*). *Purusha* (the Spirit) is the "Knower" of the field (*kshetragna*).

> This body, O Arjuna, is called the field. He who knows this is called the knower of the field by those that know (the sages).
>
> Know Me as the Knower of the field in all fields, O Arjuna ! The knowledge of the field and its knower, — that I regard as true knowledge. [XIII. 1, 2]

Jesus, in his parable, speaks of the field and the sower. The field is the body, the Sower is the Krishna, the Knower, the Christ-within. And the seed sown in the field is the wisdom (*gnanam*).

Krishna speaks of *kshetra, kshetragna* and *gneyam* (what should be known, object of knowledge).

Prakriti is the field : in it things grow and develop, then wither and die, and come forth again. *Prakriti* is a scene of activity. In *Prakriti* are the fruits of action reaped,—as in a field. The function of *Prakriti* is unconscious activity.

Purusha is Consciousness, the Conscious Principle, which detached yet lies behind all activity as witness,— as Knower of the field (*kshetragna*).

Gnanam is the seed sown in the field, the seed of wisdom. It is knowledge of (1) the field (*kshetra*), and (2) the Knower of the field.

Whatever you see is a combination of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, Spirit and matter, Soul and body. The Spirit, the *Purusha*, is the *kshetragna*.— the Knower of the field. This Knower is Krishna.

[2]

The constituents of the field (*kshetra*) are the following 24 principles :—

1. *Avyakta*, unmanifest. This is *maya*, wherein all enter at the time of involution or *pralaya*.

2. *Ahankara*, ego-sense, empiric ego, personality, selfhood, seed of self-consciousness.

3. *Buddhi*, reason, understanding, discrimination, intuition. power of direct cognition.

4. *Manas* (referred to as *ekam*, one), discursive reason.

5-14. Ten *indriyas* (senses):— five *gnana-indriyas*, organs of sense :— eyes (sight); ears (hearing); nose (smell); tongue (taste); touch or organ of action. Five *karma-indriyas* or functions :— hands, feet, mouth (speech), anus and penis.

15-19. Five domains of the senses (*indriya gocharah*):—touch (*sparsha*), taste (*rasa*), sight (*rupa*), smell (*gandha*), sound (*shabda*).

20-24. Five gross elements (*mahabhutas*):—earth (*bhumi*), water (*apa*), fire (*anata*), air (*vayu*), ether (*khan*).

The *kshetra* has five *vikaras*, evolutes, transformations, changes, modifications. They are :—

1. *iccha* and *dvesha*, desire and aversion, like and dislike, attraction and hatred;
2. *sukham* and *dukham*, pleasure and pain;
3. *sanghata*, collection, idea of bodily combination or body bundle association, collocation, collective form (body);
4. *chetana*, consciousness, intelligence, thought, congition.
5. *dhriti*, firmness constancy, the "will-to-be."

> The five gross elements, the sense of " I ", understanding as, also, the unmanifested, the ten senses and mind and the five domains of the senses;
>
> Desire and hatred, pleasure and pain, the collective form, intelligence, firmness,—these, briefly described, constitute the field and its modifications. [XIII. 5, 6]

It may be noted that the psychological functions such as desire and aversion, pleasure and pain, intelligence, firmness, are attributed to the *kshetra*, the field, not to the *Atman* (the Spirit). The *kshetra* includes both the body and the mind, but not the *Atman*. The *kshetra* is the field of the *Atman*, the *koshas* or sheaths of the Spirit.

The *vikaras* (modifications) arise in the *kshetra*, because the *jiva* is associated with *maya*, is *not* the master of *maya*. *Maya* sways the *jiva* and so in the field (*kshetra*) arise modifications (*vikaras*).—the *jiva* being swayed to and fro.

The Avatara, too, is, on the plane of manifestation, associated with *maya*, but *maya* does not dominate the Avatara. The Avatara masters *maya*.

[3]

The way of wisdom is now indicated. It has twenty marks. These twenty are the roots of wisdom. And ignorance is all that denies them. He who, in his life, bears these twenty marks achieves wisdom, the liberating realisation. He attains to the radiance of unitive knowledge.

Wisdom, while super-moral, is not non-moral, but asks for cultivation of moral qualities. Conducive to wisdom are moral attributes, virtuous conduct, absence of desire and attachment, devoted work, devotion, habit of solitude, perseverance, perception of the need of knowledge and insight into the reality of things.

> Humility, unpretentiousness, harmlessness, forbearance, rectitude, service of the (spiritual) teacher, purity (of body and mind), steadfastness and self-control,
>
> Indifference to the things of the senses, absence of egoism, recognition of the evil of birth, death, old age, sickness and pain,
>
> Unattachment, absence of self-identification with son, wife or home, and constant equal-mindedness to favourable and unfavourable events,
>
> Unswerving devotion to Me by yoga, resort to lonely spots, distaste for social gatherings,
>
> Constant striving for knowledge of the Spirit, direct intuition of the purpose of knowing Truth,—this is declared to be true knowledge (wisdom). All against this is ignorance.
>
> [XIII. 7-11]

[4]

The Knower of the field is the *Kshetragna*. He is the Supreme Brahman. He is devoid of all qualities. Therefore, we may speak of Him as neither "being" nor "non-being," neither *sat* nor *asat*. He is beyond being and non-being. Of the Supreme both, "It is" and "It is not," are untruly stated. The Supreme Brahman cannot be defined. To define Him would be to limit Him.

> I will declare that which ought to be known, that which being known, immortality is attained,—the Brahman, beginningless, supreme, who can be called neither being (*sat*) nor non-being (*asat*). [XIII. 12]

The Brahman is detached yet immanent in *Prakriti*, the non-self, the world. Hence the Brahman may be described only in paradoxes. He is detached, yet upholds the world. He is void of senses, yet supports everything : He supports without contact. He enjoys *gunas*,— experiences qualities,—yet is free from qualities. He feels the *gunas*, yet is above them, pure, divine.

> Everywhere the Brahman hath hands and feet, everywhere eyes, heads and mouths. He hears in every place, and He dwelleth in the world, enveloping all.
>
> He shineth in all sense-functions, but is void of the senses. He is detached, yet He supports everything. He is free from qualities (*nirgunam*), and yet is the experiencer of qualities. [XIII. 13, 14]

He is without, yet within. Significant are the words of Meister Eckhart :—"The more God is in all things, the more He is outside them. The more He is within, the more He is without." He moveth yet moveth not. He is afar yet close to thee. He is far-away to the ignorant, near to the enlightened. He is too subtle to be perceptible. He is incomprehensible.

> Without and within all beings is He, still yet movable. Too subtle for perception is He. And He is at hand, yet far away. [XIII. 15]

He is undivided, yet seems to dwell divided. Does He not act through living flesh? He has no constituents, yet experiences the influence of those which form the non-self. Is He not the cause of development, equilibrium, and dissolution of not-self. Does He not support life, devour life, and create life ?

> Undivided among beings is He, yet is He seated distributively (enshrined in each as if apart). He is the supporter of all beings. And he devours life, yet generates life.
> [XIII. 16]

His nature is Light,—the One Sun which illuminates all bodies. He is the Light of lights, the holy Light enthroned in every heart. He is Knowledge itself, its object and its goal. The mystic, in his pilgrim-way, journeys from the outer to the inner,—from the world, wherein he sees God's Hands everywhere and His Feet everywhere, to the heart where he sees enshrined, enthroned, the One beyond all darkness, the Light of lights, the Beloved !

> He is the Light of all lights. Him they declare to be beyond darkness. He is wisdom, the goal of wisdom, to be reached by wisdom. He is seated in the hearts of all.
> [XIII. 17]

[5]

These three are to be known :—(1) the field (*kshetra*); (2) knowledge (*gnana*),— not empirical knowledge but the knowledge transcendental; and (3) the object of knowledge (*gneya*). To know these three principles, to realise them in daily life, is to attain to the Supreme and be healed of sorrow.

> Thus have I told thee, in brief, concerning the field, knowledge and the object of knowledge. My devotee, knowing this, enters into My Being. [XIII. 18]

He who possesses knowledge attains to love, *bhakti*. The Ultimate Reality is apprehended by them who are humble and loving, pure in heart, poor in spirit. He who would know, must learn to love. We know in love : and in the measure in which we love God, we truly live. Life should be measured not by years, but by the depth of love.

"How old are you ?" was the question asked of a mystic, Bayazid. And he answered :—"Four years." And they said to him :—"How can this be ?" And Bayazid said :— "For seventy years was I veiled from God by the world. During the last four years only have I felt Him, the Beloved, and heard Him, the Inaudible, and touched Him, the Intangible. Thus for four years only have I lived !"

[6]

Both *Purusha* (the Soul) and *Prakriti* (matter or nature) are without beginning : both precede creation. But all changes, modifications, and qualities (*gunas*) originate in *Prakriti*,—are matter-born.

> Know thou that *Prakriti* (matter or nature) and *Purusha* (Soul) are both without beginning. And know thou, also, that modifications and *gunas* (qualities) are born of matter.
> [XIII. 19]

Slokas 19-23 develop a new thought. It bears upon the these principles of (1) *Prakriti*, matter or nature; (2) *Purusha*, the Soul or *Jiva*; and (3) *Purusha Parah*, the Supreme Spirit.

Both *Purusha* and *Prakriti* are beginningless (*anadi*), for they come out of the Eternal, the Supreme Spirit. The *Purusha* or the *Jiva* (the Soul), in association with matter (*Prakriti*), falls into an enjoying mood. The *Jiva* has free-will. He misuses it and submits to the tyranny of pleasure, within the bonds of time and space.

The *Jiva* is, essentially, spiritual, but is offered a free choice to come to the Lord and be devoted to Him in love and service, or to offer salutations to *maya*. When the *Jiva* chooses to be a slave to *maya*, he turns his face away from

God. Swayed by the desire for pleasure, the *Jiva* falls from the realm of Eternal Light and, enthralled by *maya*, is cast within the bonds of earthly limitations. The *Jiva* wanders in the wheel of birth and death.

> Matter or Nature is said to be the Cause which generates causes and effects; the Soul is said to be the Cause of the experience of pleasure and pain.
>
> The Soul seated in matter tasteth the qualities born of matter. Attachment to the qualities is the cause of his births in good and evil wombs. [XIII. 20, 21]

There is the *Purusha Parah*, the Supreme *Purusha*. He, too, dwells in the body. He is the *Parama-atma*, the Supreme Self. He is the Maheshvara, the Great Lord. And He, dwelling in the body, watches the actions of the *Jiva*, permits them, bears them, experiences them. He abides in all beings.

> In the body (of man) dwells the Supreme Spirit. He is said to be the Observer, the Permitter, the Supporter, the Experiencer, the Great Lord and the Supreme Self. [XIII. 22]

When, by a wrong choice, the *Jiva*, the Soul, falls into matter, the *Parmatman*, the eternal Comrade of the Soul, accompanies him. The *Parmatman* does not let the *Jiva* go, however far he may go astray. By dwelling within the *Jiva*, the *Parmatman* educates, influences, instructs and, at last, saves the *Jiva*. Not a single soul is, in the long run, lost. The *Parmatman* is the Supreme Spirit, the "Holy Spirit." In Him is the hope of the sundered, separated *Jiva*.

[7]

Knowledge of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* (with the three *gunas*) leads to liberation.

> He who thus sees the Supreme *Purusha*,— the Lord,— he truly sees, he truly knows, and he is truly free.

He who thus doth know *Purusha* and *Prakriti* with its qualities, in whatsoever condition he may be,—he is not born again. [XIII. 23]

Four methods there be which lead to perception of the Supreme *Purusha* and to Freedom:—

(1) Meditation (*dhyana*). Some see the Supreme through meditation. It is the calm, uninterrupted concentration of mind on the Supreme. it is communion with the Self within.

Silence is essential to meditation. Speech is often dissipation of energy. Silence unites the heart to God. Silence saves us from many disorders of the heart and will. To be shut up for some time, each day, with God, is to grow in the life which is life, indeed. Are you cocupied too much with outward things ? Your heart will shrink. It is good for our growth to build solitude within ourselves, in which the soul dwells in fellowship with the Life Divine.

There are aids to meditation. One simple aid is *japa*, repetition of the Divine Name or the *mantra*. The shorter the *mantra* or phrase or word, the better. Such a word is "God" or "Allah" or "Hari" or "Rama" or "Krishna" or "Christ" or "Mother (*Ma*)" or "Love." Choose whichever you are attracted to. Fasten the one word to your heart : and let the word go with you in your daily work and your daily life. The word will keep you awake. If a doubt crosses your mind, if a temptation or trouble presses upon you, answer with this one word. Repeat the one word, until it penetrates your soul, and you hear it with your heart, and see it in an integral intuition, and your whole being, gradually, becomes this one word.

Meditation, too, on an image may be helpful for certain persons, in certain circumstances.

(2) Sankhya method, the method of intellect or knowledge, actionless comprehension of the Self as distinguished from the not-Self.

(3) Method of will, *karma yoga*, discipline of work, desireless and sacrificial action.

The *karma-yogi* seeks to realise the Supreme through the discipline of work, selfless work. He dedicates the fruits of all his actions to God. The *karma-yogi* lives a disciplined life, a life of purity. And in all his actions, he seeks the will of God. The *karma-yogi* surrenders his will to the Will of God.

(4) Method of *upasna*. This is the method of worship in accordance with the instructions received from a teacher. This is the method of *shruti* (what is heard from others). This is the method of the less gifted. They adhere to what the *shastras* (scriptures) tell them: they do accordingly. They, too, who worship thus, uttimately win release: they cross beyond death.

> Some by *dhyana* (meditation) behold within them the *Atman* through the *Atman*; others behold by the Sankhya Yoga (the path of knowledge); others behold by the Yoga of Action.
>
> Others again, ignorant of these (paths of yoga), worship, having heard (of it) from others; and they, too, cross beyond death, their refuge being the scripture (*shruti*).
>
> [XIII. 24, 25]

[8]

The Supreme Lord dwells alike in all. Therefore, give up the delusion of inequality. All must be esteemed equal. Be not proud of thy rank and title, thy riches and renown. Look upon no creature with contempt. God is great in the great and the small.

> He who sees the Supreme Lord dwelling alike in all beings, the Imperishable within the perishable,—he truly sees.
>
> [XIII. 27]

He is the "Imperishable within the perishable." St. Catherine of Sienna, in her communion with Jesus Christ, asked :—"Who am I, Lord ? And tell me who Thou art !" And the answer came to her :—"My daughter, thou art that which is not, and I am that which is!"

The "perishable" is the "world of becoming," the *sansara*. But within it dwells the Imperishable. The *sansara* is a tabernacle of the Lord. Therefore, have reverence for all. Therefore, rejoice and sing His glory. The world is a Mirror of His Beauty, and nature is a Temple of His Light.

[9]

There is a "self" in man that perverts : it is the lower self. The true seeker does not cause his own destruction by letting the lower self do harm. Rather does the seeker perceive the immanent indwelling of the Lord and so, treading the highest path, press on to liberation.

> Seeing, indeed, the same Lord equally dwelling everywhere, he doth not destroy the Self by the self, and thus attaineth the supreme Goal. [XIII. 28]

[10]

Prakriti (nature) works, performeth actions, but the Self (Atman) is actionless. The Self is the witness, not the doer.

> He who sees that all actions are performed by *Prakriti* (nature) and that the Self is actionless,—he truly sees. [XIII. 29]

The universe of manifestations,—appearance, —is rooted in the One. To see this is to reach Brahman, the Eternal.

> When he perceives that the diverse forms of life are all rooted in the One and are spread forth from the One, then he attains Brahman. [XIII. 30]

The *Parmatman*,—the Indwelling Supreme,—is changeless, without beginning, without constituents or qualities (*gunas*).

Seated in the body, He is not contaminated. He is Imperishable. He is Immanent but worketh not, and is not affected.

> The Imperishable Supreme Self, O Arjuna, is without beginning and without qualities. And though He is seated in the body, yet He acteth not nor is He affected by action.
> [XIII. 31]

Like ether, subtle and undefiled, though it penetrates the whole universe, the Self (Atman), seated everywhere in the body, is stainless.

> As ether, though present everywhere, is not tainted, by reason of its subtlety, so the Self, though seated everywhere in the body, is free from taint. [XIII. 32]

> Even as the one sun giveth light to the whole world, even so doth the Lord of the field illumine the whole field, O Arjuna !
> [XIII. 33]

The Supreme Self is compared to the sun. Socrates was pressed by a disciple to show him the "Good" whereof Socrates often spoke. And Socrates said :—"That is not possible. But I can show you Its offspring, a being as like the Good as a babe may be to its father." And then Socrates led him out and pointed to the sun in the sky.

The sun illumines the field of nature but is not tainted, contaminated by aught in nature. So the Supreme Self dwells in all, but remains pure.

Again, the sun is immeasurably distant yet intimately near to every one. So is the Supreme Self, infinitely great, yet intimate with all, dwelling in all.

> They who, by the eye of wisdom, see this distinction between the field and the Knower of the field, and (—who understand) how beings may be released from *Prakriti*,—liberated from matter,—they verily, go to the Supreme.
> [XIII. 34]

CHAPTER XIV

Conquest of the three Qualities

[1]

In Chapter XIV, Krishna interprets the knowledge regarding the three *gunas* (qualities), their relation to *Prakriti* and their conquest by the sages. In the conquest of the three qualities is the supreme Wisdom of life. Having gained this wisdom, wise men, *munis*, sages, attain to supreme Perfection : it is *Nirvana*, *Pari-nirvana*.

Taking refuge in this Wisdom, they are changed into Krishna's Nature. They grow into the Image of Krishna. This is the life of fellowshtp with Krishna. They have assimilation with Krishna's Essence : they become one with Krishna.

And becoming one with the Lord, they win release from re-birth. They are not re-born, even when the worlds are born : and they are not disturbed, even when the worlds go into dissolution.

> Once more will I declare to thee that supreme Wisdom,—of all wisdom the best,—having known which,

all sages have gone hence to the highest Perfection.

Taking refuge in this Wisdom, they become of like nature to Me. They are not re-born at the time of creation; nor do they suffer at the time of dissolution.

[XIV. 1, 2]

[2]

Great Brahma (*mahad brahma*) or *Maya* is the womb of Krishna. In this womb, Krishna sows the germ, the seed of all being.

Mahad brahma is *Prakriti :* it is the womb. Krishna is the "Sower" who sows the seed. Krishna is the Father who deposits in Nature's womb the seed of Life. So Krishna causeth the birth of every individual. Krishna is the "seed-giving" or generating Father.

> My womb is the great-Brahma; in that I deposit the seed, and from it is the birth of all beings, O Arjuna !
>
> In whatsoever wombs, forms (of life) are produced, O Arjuna, great-Brahma is their womb, and I am the Father who sows the seed.
>
> [XIV. 3, 4]

In every *jiva*, there is the seed of life. This seed of life. says the Gita, is of God. What a thrilling thought ! The seed of God is in us. The seed of God is in every one, "Pear seeds grow into pear trees, nut seeds into nut trees, and God seeds into God," says Eckhart. Alas ! we are often ego-centric : but we should be God-centric. The seed of God is in us !

[3]

Of *Prakriti* or Nature there are three strands or ropes. They are the three *gunas*. All actions are performed through the three *gunas* (qualities). They are matter-born and they bind the soul to the body. They fetter the *jiva* in the body.

> *Sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*, the three qualities (*gunas*) are born of *Prakriti* (nature; matter). They bind fast in the body, O Arjuna, the Imperishable that dwelleth in the body.
>
> Of these, *sattva*, from its purity, brings illumination and health. It bindeth by attachment to happiness and by attachment to knowledge, O Arjuna! [XIV. 5, 6]

What is *sattva*? Purity or Light. It makes the *jiva* eager for knowledge and virtue. But even "Light" binds *jiva* to the body, the flesh, when it causes attachment. There are scholars eager for knowledge : their joy is in study and scholarship. But they develop an attachement to knowledge, and will not easily renounce the scholar's way. And they do not cease to be ego-centred. They have a tendency towards introversion, self-analysis, scholarship, thought; these become to them "ends" and are not "means" to the ultimate transcendence of thought and scholarship. They are *sattvic*, but not God-centred.

Think of Nietzsche. What a noble soul ! In his private life, he was pure as a maiden. His admirers called him a "saint."

He protested against vulgar money-making. Lonely, was his soul, but not in communion with God. He was "ego-centred," not "God-centred." His thought eclipsed the Spirit. He despised the masses. He misunderstood Christ. He asked for leaders who would "deduce their rights" not from God nor from the people, but who would "boldly rule in their own right, because they are stronger!" Here is the difference between the scholar's knowledge and true enlightenment. Knowledge is ego-centred : enlightenment is centred in the Spirit.

In the West, there are many scholars of *sattvic* temperament : but their concern is less with Eternity than with "future time" and "present time," with plans and programmes of reform and progress. In India, even after two centuries of Anglicisation, the truth is still not forgotten that the final end of life is unitive knowledge of God,—enlightenment, *mukti*, emancipation from bondage of matter and self. And so, even today, you may find men who, in middle life, give up position and power, wealth and academic pursuit, to become *jignasus*, seekers after enlightenment, seekers after God, and endeavour to transcend the *sattvic* life to a life of contemplation and one-pointed devotion to the Divine Reality.

Rajas is energy, mobility, passion. *Rajas* is *trishna*, a thirst for life. *Rajas* is passionate energy.

Rajas is the child of strong desire and attachment. It binds the soul to *Prakriti* by activity.

> Know thou, O Arjuna, that *rajas*, which is of the nature of passion, is the source of attachment and thirst. And *rajas* bindeth the embodied soul by attachment to action.
>
> [XIV. 7]

When greed or external restless activity predominates, it means *rajas* prevails. Zeal for work is a mark of the man of *rajas*.

The man of *rajas* is always in the midst of struggle and work. He has a strong desire to assert and achieve. He struggles hard to show or establish his superiority over others. He goes about in life, not as a servant of Krishna, but as the proud lord of all he surveys. The man under the influence of *rajas* is the man of action, of initiative, of inordinate ambition and restlessness.

Break the bondage of work through work. How ? Make your work an offering to the Lord. Convert work into *yagna*, i.e., sacrificial offering of love.

But *tamas* (all bewildering darkness), know thou, is born of ignorance and is the deluder of souls. It bindeth by heedlessness, indolence and sleep, O Arjuna! [XIV. 8]

Tamas is neither light nor energy, but lethargy, listlessness, delusion. *Tamas* is daskness : it is a delusive child of ingorance. It binds the soul to *Prakriti* by heedlessness, indolence and sleep.

When darkness and inertia predominate, you have a sure sign that *tamas* prevails.

In the man of *tamas*, the forces of matter predominate and he lives like the lower animals. He eats, drinks and sleeps : he lives from moment to moment. He tries to satisfy his bodily appetites. He does not bother himself about ideals in life. He is slothful, negligent, deluded and ignorant.

Break the bondage of *tamas* by doing your appointed task, by fulfilling your *dharma*, by taking your place at the station of life, however humble or insignificant. Nothing is really insignificant. Remember, it is not to the giant oaks only that the wind speaks. The voice of the wind cometh, also, to the little blades of grass.

Sattva bindeth to happiness, *rajas* to action, O Arjuna ! And tamas, having shrouded wisdom, bindeth to heedlessness (or negligence).

When *sattva* overpowers *rajas* and *tamas*, *sattva* prevails, O Arjuna ! When *rajas* overpowers *sattva* and *tamas*, *rajas* prevails. And when *tamas* overpowers *sattva* and *rajas*, *tamas* prevails.

When the light of wisdom streameth forth from all the gates of the body, then it may be known that *sattva* predominates.

When greed, external activity, zeal for work, restlessness, envious desire are conspicuous, know that *rajas* predominates, O Arjuna !

> When darkness, inaction, heedlessness and delusion are conspiuous, know that *tamas* predominates, O Arjuna ! [XIV. 9-13]

[4]

The *sattvic* man goes, after death, to spotless spheres of the wise, but he has yet to attain. After death, he proceeds to high places, the celestial realms of *Devachana*, for a period of rest. He comes back to the wheel of birth and death, but is born in a home of the lovers of God. He dwells among the pure and takes up the thread of evolution where he left it in his previous birth.

> If *sattva* prevaileth when (the body of) the embodied soul dies, then he goeth forth to the spotless worlds where dwell those who know the Highest. [XIV. 14]

The *rajasic* man is re-born among those attached to action. And if a man dies under the dominant influence of *tamas*, he is re-born in the "wombs of the senseless."

> Meeting with death when *rajas* prevails; he is born among those attached to action; and if (the body) dies when *tamas* prevails, he is born in the wombs of the senseless. [XIV. 15]

[5]

The work done under the influence of *sattva* is spotless and full of purity. The work done under the influence of *rajas* bears painful fruit (*dukkha*). And the work done under the influence of *tamas* bears the fruit of what is worse than *dukkha*, viz., ignorance (*agnana*).

> The fruit of *sattvic* action is said to be harmonious and pure; the fruit of *rajas* is pain and the fruit of *tamas* is stupidity, ignorance. [XIV. 16]

[6]

Conquer the three *gunas*, Arjuna ! Be a seer ! The seer realises :—

(1) that liberation is won by him who knows that it is the *gunas* out of which proceedeth action, work; and (2) that there is One Beyond, the Supreme. He is higher than the *gunas*. *Gunas* are the seed in the *Prakriti* : out of this seed, the body grows. So out of *Prakriti* are produced the *gunas*.

The wise man "crosses over" the three *gunas*, controls them, conquers them, so that they move in rhythm and harmony,— as one whole,— with the wisdom of Krishna. They who know this are liberated from birth and death : they drink the waters of immortality.

> When the seer perceiveth no agent other than the *gunas* (qualities of nature) and knoweth That which is beyond the *gunas*, he entereth into My being.
>
> When the embodied soul hath crossed over the three *gunas*,— whence all bodies have been produced,— then, indeed, freed from birth and death, from old age and sorrow, he drinketh the waters of immortality.
>
> [XIV. 19, 20]

[7]

The man who has crossed beyond the three *gunas* is become the master of matter. His marks are these :—

(1) He is indifferent to the three *gunas* when they are in action and when they cease to act, for he realises that each one has his own evolution.

(2) He is undisturbed by the results of action, good or evil. He realises that all activity belongs to the *gunas*, *Prakriti*. He sees the *gunas* at work and is seated in their midst, indifferent, unconcerned. Unshaken is he by the

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gunas. "It is *gunas* that move," he says. "Objects are toys : they dance to the tune of *gunas*." He himself is a pilgrim. As dreams do not disturb the awakened one, so *gunas* do not bind him.

(3) All things and beings and states are, to him, alike. Indifferent is he to "pairs of opposites." So is he the same to friend or foe, the same in love or dislike, in censure and in praise. And to him a clod, a stone and gold are alike.

(4) He does all work without desire. He hath abandoned all ambition,—undertakings, enterprise.

> He who doth not shun the light (of knowledge) or activity or delusion, when they arise, nor yearneth for them when they are absent;
>
> He who sitteth unconcerned, undisturbed by the *gunas*, standing apart, without being shaken, knowing that it is only the *gunas* that act;
>
> He to whom pleasure and pain are alike, who is centered in his Self, to whom clod or stone or gold are one, who is the same to loved and unloved, whose mind is steady, who remains the same in censure and in praise;
>
> He who looks equally upon honour and dishonour and is the same to friend and foe, who has abandoned all ambition,— he is said to have crossed over the *gunas*.
>
> [XIV. 22-25]

What is the way which a man may tread to cross the *gunas* and become one with the Eternal ? It is the way of (1) exclusive, unswerving devotion; and (2) loving service to Krishna. In love, he annihilates himself and enters into union with God : he becomes nothing, a zero, and is united with the One. Such a man realises the *atma-svarupa*. He enters into Krishna the Eternal and becomes the Eternal.

> He, who serveth Me with unswerving devotion, passes beyond the *gunas* and becomes one with Brahman.
> [XIV. 26]

To love Krishna is to be one with Brahman, for in Krishna rests Brahman. Indeed, for the *bhakta*, Krishna is Brahman. And in Krishna is the source of (1) Immortality, and (2) the Eternal Law of Right (*dharma*), and (3) the Bliss that knows no equal and no end,—Bliss absolute.

> For I am the abode of Brahman, the inexhaustible nectar of immortality; (I am the ground) of Eternal Righteousness and (the source) of unending Bliss.
> [XIV. 27]

Brahman is Krishna : Krishna is Brahman. There is the unity of the Twain. Brahman becomes Krishna to show grace to *bhaktas*. Krishna is Brahman in manifestation.

CHAPTER XV

The World-Tree

[1]

Krishna pictures *Prakriti* (cosmos, the world) as the Ashvattha Tree.

The word "ashvattha" means "not stable," "in a flux." The Ashvattha was, in popular belief, a tree growing with its roots spread above, its branches below. Is not the world such a tree? The ashvattha is the banyan tree. Is not the world the Eternal Banyan ? It proceedeth from *avyakta, maya* : but above it is God. But only men of *vairagya* (detachment) will see the world-tree in God and know that its Root rises upward in the Eternal.

Of this Cosmic or World-tree,—the Tree of *Prakriti*,—the roots rise upward, i. e., are above the ground or the visible world. The root is high above in the *avyakta*, the unmanifest : the root is *maya*.

The tree has leaves : they are the Vedic *mantras*, hymns. The leaves give shade and shelter. So in life's journey, in this world, men may find shade and shelter in the Vedic hymns, in the great thoughts and *mantras* of the Rishis and the sages.

With roots which upward rise and with branches which descend, the Ashvattha (the eternal banyan tree) is said to be indestructible. Its leaves are Vedic hymns. He who knoweth the tree, he knoweth the Vedas.

[XV. 1]

The Tree has branches, some shooting upward and some which descend downward to the earth. The branches represent *jivas*. The "upward" branches represent gods, the "downward" branches represent human beings, animals, reptiles and insects.

The branches are nourished by water, moisture, exhalation. This is represented by the three *gunas*. Alas ! men are caught up in the *gunas* and in sense-entanglements. Men seldom see that the root of the Cosmic Tree rises upward in the Eternal. The *gunas* are the water of the branches.

The Tree is nourished by the three *gunas* (qualities of *Prakriti*) : the *gunas* are the water of the Tree.

The Tree has its twigs, shoots or buds : these are the external objects (*vishayas*).

The Tree has secondary roots. Roots bind a tree to the soil. And these secondary roots, too, bind. They are bent down into the earth, binding the Tree. These downward roots are *vasanas*, *trishnas*, *raga-dvesha*, desires : they bind the tree in bonds of *karma* (action), objects and results of *karma* : they bind to birth and death. These secondary roots (*vasanas*) lie hidden below the ground : and they bear fruit of *karma* in the world of men, binding them to the wheel of birth and death.

Downward and upward spread the branches of the Tree. It is nourished by the *gunas* (qualities). The objects of the senses are its buds. Downward, too, grow its (secondary) roots; they bind as bonds of action in the world of men.

[XV. 2]

Men, alas ! do not see the Tree as a whole. They do not understand its significance. They are absorbed in the leaves and fruits and twigs of the Tree : they are lured by sense-attractions.

The Tree seems endless. Who knows its beginning ? Who knows its ending ? Does it not proceed from *maya* ? Has *maya* a beginning or an ending ? *Maya* is *avyakta*.

Men do not understand this Tree. It is *mayaic;* it is a mirage. Do not wander in this strange world-tree. You will not find a way out of its puzzle-paths. You must cut it down. So may you find the way whence you will not return,—the way that will win you release from re-birth and take you to your Home, the Eternal Abode of Krishna.

How may the Tree be cut down ? And what is the Abode, the Home, whence the *jiva* returns not to the wheel of birth and death ?

The Tree is to be cut down by the weapon, the sharp axe of non-attachment.

> Not here may be discerned the real form of this Tree, nor its end, nor its origin, nor its foundation. Strongly-rooted is the Ashvattha Tree. Cut it down by the weapon of non-attachment.
>
> So may you tread the path from which there is no return : for so may you reach that Primal Person from whom streamed forth the Ancient Energy (the cosmic process).
>
> [XV. 3, 4]

The way of detachment is repeatedly emphasised by the Gita. "He whose self is not attached to the external objects," we read, "he obtains the happiness that is within his own Self." And again :—"He who casting off all desires lives free from attachments, he obtains tranquility."

Freedom from all attachments,— is essential to union with God. The *jiva* must renounce attachment to money, possession, property, attachment to house, family, country, must renounce all earthly affection. Jesus asked his disciples to renounce exclusive family ties. Private affections and preferences imprison the *jiva*. St. John of Cross says : — "The soul that is attached to anything, however much good there may be in it, will not arrive at the liberty of divine union. For whether it is a strong wire rope or a slender delicate thread that holds the bird, it matters not, if it really holds it fast. For until the cord be broken, the bird cannot fly. So the soul, held by the bonds of human affections, however slight they may be cannot, while they last, make its way to God !"

Not merely must we resist running after *vishayas*, sense-objects : we must have no relish for them. The will-to-live in God means the will-to-possess nothing, to have nothing, to be nothing. In being nothing, is the greatest blessing of the *jiva*.

More than wealth and goods and the world's honours, the greatest hindrance is the self. Detachment is a sacrificial act : detachment means surrender of the little self. You may renounce wealth and comfort : but you do not practise detachment until you renounce the "ego." As a Sufi teacher says:— "To no purpose do you change your dress and food. If you eat a single blade of grass in a lifetime, if you remain clad in a single garment for a thousand years, if you are shut up in a cell away from the sight of men,— beware, lest you are deluded. All these are but the subtleties of the desire-nature, its cunning and craft."

He is truly detached who hath surrendered his self to the Lord. Such a man desires nothing, asks for nothing, but adores the Will of the Lord :— "Thou knowest what is best for me." Some one said to the Sufi mystic, Junayd

Baghdadi :— "Why don't you ask the Lord to grant you Divine Vision ? He will deny you nothing !" The Sufi mystic said :— "This have I been taught,— to desire nothing, to ask for nothing. Moses asked for a vision of God and was denied it. Mahomed was blessed with the Vision without asking for it. When the time is ripe, the Lord will Himself remove the veils and the Divine Face will be revealed unto Me."

With the weapon, the sword, the axe of self-abnegation, hew down the Ashvatha Tree and its deeply embedded roots. So may the *Adi Purusha*,— the Primal Person,— whenceforth streamed the Ancient Energy,— the sap that floweth through the universe of the not- Self, *Prakriti*, the Cosmos, the Ashvattha Tree,— be revealed. So may a man win release from re-birth and reach the Eternal Abode of Krishna, whence there is no return.

To the Home, the Indestructible Home, to Krishna's Abode go the *vairagis*. They are humble and undeluded : they are victorious over attachment, desire and emotion : and they abide in the *Adhyatman*, the Inner Self. These blessed ones dwell in the Eternal Home of the Lord. And Krishna's Abode needs no sun nor moon nor any fire to give it brightness.

> They go to that Indestructible Home, who have no pride and no delusion (*moha*), who victorious rise over the vice of attachment, who dwell constantly in the *Adhyatman* (the Self within), whose desires have departed, who have been liberated from the *dvandas* (pairs of opposites) of pleasure and pain.
>
> Nor sun, nor moon, nor fire shineth there : nor any one who goeth there ever returneth. It is My supreme Abode.
>
> [XV. 5, 6]

[3]

In this Cosmic Tree of *Prakriti* appear *jivas*, individuals. Whence are they?

The *jiva* (individual) is a fragment of Krishna. An eternal portion or spark of Krishna appears in the world of life as individuals (*jiva-bhuta*), souls who move about in different bodies. All *jivas*, living souls, proceed from Eternal Krishna. This is forgotten by man, for he is absorbed in the leaves and fruits of the Tree.

A fragment of Krishna is "veiled in matter," rests in *Prakriti*, draws in space from matter the senses (*indriyas*), six in number,—five of which are the sense-organs and the sixth is the mind.

> An eternal portion of Mine own Self is transformed, in the world of life, into a living soul, and draweth round itself the senses of which the mind is the sixth,—veiled in matter. [XV. 7]

Krishna is the *Adi Purusha* (the Primal Person) (1) in *jivas* (separate bodies) and (2) in the Cosmos as a whole. Krishna is the Indwelling Spirit of every *jiva* or soul. Krishna is *Adhyatman*.

[4]

The *Atman* is enshrined in, presides over, the ear, the eye, the skin, the tongue, the nose and the mind. And through this association with the senses and the mind, the *Atman* frequents; enjoys, experiences the world of sense. Yet the *Atman* dwells in the *Atma-dhama* and only becomes manifest in the body.

But this perception cometh to the wise, the yogis, not to the deluded, the mindless, for their hearts are not pure.

> Enshrined in the ear, the eye, the skin, the tongue

and the nose,— and in the mind, also,— He enjoyeth the objects of the senses.

The deluded do not perceive Him when He departeth or resteth or feeleth, in association with the *gunas*. But they, who have the eye of wisdom, see.

The *yogis* also, striving, see Him within; but the unintelligent, who are not purified, they struggle but see Him not. [XV. 9-11]

Krishna is the Life of the Universe, as a whole.

He is the light in sun and moon and fire by which all things are sustained. Life, in its fullness, is in Krishna. The sun, the moon, the stars,— all are the splendour of Krishna.

He is the *soma*, the moisture in the moon, that falls by night to nourish herbs. Krishna is the vital Essence supporting all life on earth, the sap of trees and plants and herbs.

Krishna is the inner Fire, the Fire of life, the vital Force that enables creatures to digest food and so to eat and live. Krishna is the Breath of life, the Cause and Source of nourishment.

He is seated in the hearts of all and bestows on men memory, knowledge, and conviction (power of reason which removes negation or doubt or false judgements).

And He is revealed by all the scriptures and He is the Genius and Inspiration of the Vedas. He is the Comprehender of the Vedic truths and He is the Author of the "end of the Vedas," i. e., the Upanishads or the Vedanta.

The splendour that issues from the sun and illumineth the whole world, that which is in the moon and in the fire, that splendour know as from Me.

Entering the earth, I support beings by my vital energy and, having become the delicious *soma*-juice (or moisture), I nourish all plants.

> Having become the fire of life, seated in the bodies of breathing beings, and blent with the life-breaths (outward and inward), I digest all nourishment (four kinds of food).
>
> And I am seated in the hearts of all; and from Me arise memory and *gnana* (knowledge) and (the power which removes) doubt or negation. And Me the Vedas reveal; and I the Vedas know, and Author am I of the Vedanta,— the "end of the Veda." [XV. 12-15]

[5]

There be three *Purushas*, three persons,— three energies in the universe :— (1) *Kshara-prakriti,*— or the changeful, the perishable, the temporary, the forms of finite life. (2) *Akshara-prakriti* or *kutastha* (rock-seated inside *maya*),— the *avyakta jiva*, the *chaitanya shakti*, from which the perishable takes birth. (3) *Uttama Purusha*, *Purushottama*, *Parmatman*, Supreme Self. He is the Transcendent Spirit and, also, the Immanent Supporter and Eternal Governor of the Universe. The third Person,—*Purushottama,*— is Krishna.

In chapter VII, Krishna called *Purusha* and *Prakriti* as His two *Prakritis*. In chapter XV, here, He calls them the two *Purushas*. The two are *Purushas,*—Energies,— for they are the upadhis of the One Supreme *Purusha*, the *Purushottama*.

Krishna is the *Purushottama*, the Person Supreme, transcending both *kshara* and *akshara*.

> There are two *Purushas* (energies) in this world, the perishable and the imperishable. The perishable is all beings, the imperishable is called *Kutastha* (rock-seated; veiled in mystery; seated inside *maya*).
>
> Another *Purusha* there is,— the Highest,— declared

as the *Purushottama* (Supreme Self). He pervadeth all; He sustaineth the three worlds. He is the Indestructible Lord.

Since I transcend the perishable and I am higher, also, than the imperishable, alike in the world and in the Veda I am known as the Supreme Person.

[XV. 16-18]

The knowledge of Krishna as the *Purushottama* leads to *bhakti* (devotion).

He who, undeluded, knoweth Me thus as the *Purushottama* (the Person Supreme), he knoweth all and he worshippeth Me with all his soul, O Arjuna!

Thus have I told thee the most secret teaching, Arjuna! He who knoweth this, he is illuminated and his labours are finished, O Arjuna! [XV. 19, 20]

This knowledge giveth understanding. Finished are the man's labours. Then he understands that even the good things of life—friends, loved ones, riches, health, knowledge,—are but "flowers" and "fruits" : he receives them as gifts from the *Purushottama* to strengthen him in his pilgrimage : but he does not forget that his goal is God. Even the most precious things of the world have to be passed by, left behind, to reach the Home. He is a *vairagi*. All things perish : but Krishna is Eternal. Such a man does his daily work, but he has gone beyond "duty" to *Nirvana*, the Great Mystery of illumination and adoration.

CHAPTER XVI

The Divine and the Demoniac

[1]

In this world there are two types of men,— the divine and the demoniac.

The divine men are fundamentally spiritual. They are *jivas* who, living in this world, are not swayed by *maya*. They remember the pledge of purity they took in their true, their spiritual Home. And in this world they show, in their thoughts, aspirations and actions, that desire (*trishna*) does not dominate them. They walk the way of yoga, keeping themselves detached from *bhoga*. They show, from their very birth, tendencies to the divine way of life. They are gifted *jivas* : they bring with themselves gifts divine. These they express on the plane of *maya*. They manifest the glory of the divine life.

They who have the *daivi sampad* (the divine heritage) and whose feet are set on the path which leads to liberation, have the following twenty-six marks:—

(1) Fearlessness. Most of us live in a world of fear, worry, anxiety, for most of us do not love God. He who has love in his heart for God is unafraid. He who has made of his work an offering to God and is absorbed in love of the

divine life has got rid of all fear.

(2) Purity of the heart. Purity of the heart is freedom from all duplicity. It is singleness of the soul. This purity is achieved through overcoming the storms of life. When the storms are faced with fearlessness and overcome, the man is born anew and becomes a little child. So Goethe says:—"Keep thyself pure, esteem thyself little."

To grow in purity, meditate on the words :— "The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit."

The pure heart abandons the world and admits nothing but God. The pure heart asks nothing, but leaves itself in the divine Arms, and wastes no time in any desire, but ever wills what God wills of it.

(3) Steadfastness in knowledge and yoga. It is perseverence in the Path of Wisdom, the Path of Truth. This steadfastness is not an intellectual or philosophical pursuit, but calls for *abhyasa*, application in daily life,—calls for moral and spiritual discipline.

A steadfast quest for Truth is necessary. And this quest is through (1) daily meditation; (2) devotional practices; (3) love to all; and (4) unselfish service of children, the aged and the sick. In the quest of Truth there are difficulties : the true man overcomes them by persevering in the path. Sometimes, indeed, the whispering doubt arises:— "The goal is unattainable!" The true man does not listen to the whispers of doubt : he moves on ! He continues to tread the path! And, one day, he attains! He is not hasty, nor rash : he perseveres, knowing that noble things appear at first to be unfathomable !

(4) Almsgiving (*dana*). The law of giving was declared by Jesus, when he said:— "Freely ye have received: freely give!" Do we give freely? Or do we keep back? And giving (*dana*) is measured not by its quantity, but by its quality. It is the spirit of our giving that matters. *Dana*

is of the heart, not of hands. The man who truly gives does not proclaim. A smile given to a brother or sister in need is *dana* : water given to a thirsty traveller is *dana* : removing a stone thrown on the road is *dana*. The three steps to Heaven, in Islamic teaching, are *dana*, fast and prayer. When Bernard desired to join St. Francis in his work, the Saint said:— "First go and sell what you have and give to the poor."

(5) Self-control, control of the senses, mastery over appetites and passions.

Horses are tamed. The senses (*indriyas*) are horses : they must be tamed. How ? Make Him your Charioteer !

The body is meant to be a *karma-kshetra*. Most of us, alas! have made it a *bhoga-kshetra*. Rule your *trishna*, appetite, restrain your passions and desires,—and you become the Master of Alexander!

The essence of the wisdom of Socrates is in the words:— "Know thyself!" The essence of the wisdom of the Hindu yogis in ancient India was :— "Conquer thyself!" Pythagoras, who shaped his life and teaching on the model of a Hindu yogi, said :— "No man is free who cannot command himself." Self-conquest is the true freedom.

(6) Sacrifice (*yagna*). This is of various kinds. The offering of *yagna* is based on the thought that the gods, men and sub-human creatures form the symphony of life. The *yagnas* reveal the joy of being self-sacrificing, of giving a helping hand to those who, as guests, need your succour and help. The *yagnas* teach you to be humble as you give offerings to the gods. The *yagnas* teach you that you have a duty to the dear, departed ones, that you should, from time to time, lift your eyes from the earth to the realm where rest your ancestors, asking for your help and service. The *yagnas*, also, teach you the duty of worshipping daily the Eternal and Infinite.

(7) Study of the scriptures (*svadhyaya*). This includes chanting of the Divine Names and glories.

(8) Austerity (*tapas*), enduring hardships in the pursuit of a holy life. This austerity is (1) practice of truth-speaking; (2) truth loving; and (3) avoiding of luxury.

(9) Uprightness, straightforwardness (*arjavam*). The men of divine qualities are straightforward in acts of daily life : they are upright in their dealings.

(10) They practise harmlessness (*ahinsa*), in a world where so many men are not men but wolves. They abstain from all violence.

(11) They practise truth (*satyam*) in daily life. They represent things as they have known or understood them. "Consider not him a pariah who is born in a family of outcastes. He who breaks his word is an outcaste," says a Hindu proverb. "Truth shall make you free," says Jesus.

Truth and love,— these two interpret to me the meaning of God.

(12) They have absence of anger or wrath (*akrodha*). They never get angry even with those who harm them,— or even when provoked.

(13) They are men of renunciation (*tyaga*), detachment. This renunciation is (a) of the idea of doership in action; (b) of vanity, egoism, conceit, avarice and lust: and (c) of objects of worldly joy.

(14) They have peacefulness or tranquility (*shanti*), their minds being at rest.

(15) They have aversion to fault-finding or slander. They do not speak ill of others.

(16) They have compassion (*daya*) for all living beings.

(17) They are free from coveteousness : they have no greed. They have no "thirst of riches." "Men," says the *Hitopadesha*. "are insatiable. With a river of gold,

they still think they are poor! He by whom flamingoes, green parrots and peacocks are brilliantly attired,— He hath made provision for thee, also! Why, then, be greedy? Be content!

Freidoun was not satisfied with a kingdom. Alexander wept when he came to the end of his conquests. But an infant is happy with the sand which fills his little hand : and I know not if the infant regards silver as more precious than sand. The infant has no greed!

Work is good: work is necessary: work is an integral part of our life. But useless activity must be avoided. Our appointed battle of life we must not quit : but let us not be greedy of work. An humble task, if it is my duty, —well done,— will help me and my society better than a grand task which I do not know how to accomplish and which will only stir up ambition and strife. Cooking and scrubbing can train me for my spiritual Home. In little and lowly acts does the divine man take joy.

(18) Gentleness, tenderness of heart, mild bearing. The divine man is patient. As the earth bears with those who dig it, so does he bear with those who revile him. He is gentle, because he knows that they who revile him do not know,— are ignorant. As the *Kural says* :— "To bear with the ignorant is might of might!"

(19) They have modesty,— feeling ashamed of doing anything wrong, feeling God's Presence everywhere.

(20) They are not fickle. They are men of constancy. They are steady and so do not indulge in idle thought or idle talk. They abstain from useless activity.

(21) They have *tejas*, vigour, ardour, energy. They acquire a lustre of countenance. Krishna and Buddha had radiant faces.

Tejas includes "sense of honour." Socrates declined to run away from his prison-cell: he was a man of honour.

He showed the nobility of a man of honour, when he quietly drank the cup of hemlock.

(22) They are men of forgiveness, not revenge,—asking the Lord to forgive even them that do them harm. Mahomed forgave his enemies. Rishi Dayanand forgave his cook, Jagannath, who poisoned him.

(23) They have *dhriti*, fortitude: they do not lose patience.

(24) They have *shaucham*, purity. They are always clean in body. Is not cleanliness next to godliness? Today, the cry is for beauty of colour and pigment,— not cleanliness.

(25) They are free from envy or malice. They have no hate in their hearts, no ill-will against any. They have thankfulness and gratitude for the least good done to them. Far from malice, they give service to others and, in serving them, become one with them.

Kaikeyi was infected with envy and she sent Rama into exile.

(26) They have no pride or conceit. They do not hold themselves as superior to anyone. Pride or *ahankara* is, indeed, the last to go !

These 26 constitute the *daivi sampad*, the wealth of the divine man, the divine treasure of life.

> Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge and yoga, almsgiving, self-control, sacrifice, study of the scriptures, austerity, uprightness;
>
> Harmlessness, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, peacefulness, aversion to fault-finding, compassion to living beings, freedom from coveteousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness;
>
> Vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of envy, freedom from excessive pride,— these, O Arjuna, belong to him who is born with the divine heritage.
>
> [XVI. 1-3]

[2]

Who are the men of demoniac nature ? They are called *asuras*. In an Upanishad we read :— By the breath, the upward breath of his mouth, Prajapati created the gods (*suras*) : and by the downward breathing he created the *asuras*. "Having created them, there was, as it were, darkness for him." This darkness represents evil and ignorance. The "down breath" was the breath of desires. Desires are undivine. Desires are vibrations from below. The desire-mind is the adversary of the divine spirit within. The desire-mind is the "demon." There are men who are dominated and ruthlessly drawn by the desire-mind. Such men are *asura*-men. They are on the path of bondage.

They are (1) hypocrites : they practise dissimulation and assume false appearances. (2) They are arrogant and conceited, intoxicated with power. (3) They are men of wrath. (4) They have rudeness and harshness. (5) They are men of ignorance and unwisdom.

> Hypocrisy, arrogance and conceit, wrath, as also, rudeness and ignorance,—these, O Arjuna, belong to him who is born with the demoniac nature. [XVI. 4]

They who have the *asuri sampad* (demoniac estate) and are on the path of bondage have the following marks :—

(1) Lack of discrimination. They cannot discriminate between right activity (what should be done) and right abstinence (what should be avoided).

(2) Lack of purity. They are unclean in body and mind.

(3) Lack of propriety. Their conduct is reproachable. They recognise no rule of life.

(4) Lack of truth. Truth is not in them : they are given to lying.

(5) Atheism. They arrogantly assert that the universe is without a moral basis, has no basic laws, is without a Ruler (God) and without a guiding and synthesising Principle,— a mass of blind chance and blind competition,— that the universe is a house of lust, conceived in lust, that all creatures have sprung from the union of the sexes (male and female principles).

(6) Dark-mindedness. They are lost souls and have small understanding. Their intellects are dull.

(7) They give themselves to evil deeds, cruel acts. They work for the destruction of the world : they are the enemies of mankind.

(8) They say the world is for enjoyment only and so they surrender themselves to insatiable desires. They live for nothing but desire and all that ministers to it.

(9) They practise dissimulation and assume false appearances in order to make a favourable impression on others. They are hypocrites.

(10) They are puffed up with pride.

(11) In blindness they cling to wrong ideas,—like Ravana who thought there was no harm in stealing Sita.

(12) They are tormented by endless worries which do not leave them till death.

(13) To them there is nothing higher than pleasure. Pleasure is their *summum bonum*, the highest good, "Eat, drink, and be merry," is the motto of their life.

(14) They are caught into the sinful, lustful course. They indulge in immoral practices.

(15) They are men of wrath, anger.

(16) They amass wealth by unjust means for indulging in luxuries and sense-enjoyments.

(17) Their egoism is awful. On their thoughts and their acts is the sting of "I". They regard themselves as supreme. "Is not our future famous, brave and great?" they exclaim

"Rich are we, proudly born. What other men live like us?" So they pile up wealth, more and more, and, killing some, gloat over the feat, and expect to kill other enemies. "Look!" they say, "are we not lords?"

And they perform ostentatiously the sacrifices which are so only in name and with disregard to *shastric* rules : they are lip-sacrifices for ostentation.

(18) Their mind is always wandering here and there.

(19) They are enmeshed in the web of delusion.

(20) They hate the Lord dwelling in their hearts and in the hearts of all.

Such men of demoniac nature wander in the wheel of birth and death, and are cast down into the wombs of degraded parents. And they tread the nether road, sinking lower and lower in the scale of evolution, sinking into perdition, their souls ruined, lost.

> The demoniac know not about the way of action or the way of abstinence. They have neither purity, nor good conduct, nor truth.
>
> They say that the world has no truth, no (moral) basis, no God, brought about by mutual union, a product of lust and nothing else.
>
> Firm in this belief, these lost souls of dull understanding and cruel deeds, come forth as the enemies of the world for its destruction.
>
> Surrendering themselves to insatiable desires, full of hypocrisy, conceit and arrogance, clinging to wrong ideas through delusion, they act with impure resolves.
>
> Beset with innumerable cares which last until death, regarding gratification of desires as their highest aim, feeling sure that this is all;
>
> Ensnared by a hundred idle hopes, slaves to lust and anger, they buy wealth with base deeds to glut hot appetites and indulge in sensual enjoyments.

"This I have gained today, that desire shall I attain. This wealth is mine, that also shall be mine.

"This foe have I slain; others, too, shall I slay. I am the Lord (of all); I enjoy myself; I am prosperous, mighty and happy.

"I am rich and high-born; who is there like unto me ? I shall perform sacrifices, I shall give (alms), I shall make merry." Thus (they say), deluded by ignorance.

Bewildered by many thoughts, enmeshed in the web of delusion, addicted to the gratification of desires, they sink into a foul hell.

Self-conceited, stubborn, drunk with the pride of their wealth, they perform sacrifices for outward show, disregarding scriptural rules.

Vowed to egoism, insolence and power, and to lust and anger, these wicked people hate Me who doth dwell in their bodies and (in those of) others.

Those who thus hate Me, who are cruel, the worst of mankind, these evil-doers I hurl constantly into the wombs of demons.

Fallen into the wombs of demons, they spend life after life, enveloped in delusion. They come not to Me, O Arjuna, but sink into the lowest state. [XVI. 7-20]

Yet even they are not lost. They are purified by suffering. They are restored to re-formation. Not even to them is denied *mukti* (liberation). It cometh to them, it may be, after long periods of evolution. For in them, too, is the Indwelling Krishna (*Adhyatman*). He never ceases to make His Presence known within them : and, again and again, do they experience remorse and are conscience-stricken. They, too, are given the power to dominate matter or the flesh, to conquer the three qualities, their organs and senses, to win victory over the lower self, and to make Krishna the Charioteer of the car of their life. They, too, are, one day, released from bondage : they, too, enter into the Abode of Krishna.

Let not the godly men despise the *asura*-men. "There is none good but God," said Jesus. God alone is good and pure. The greatest of the godly man, if from him the Presence of God be withdrawn, becomes no better than a cold leper : the worst of *asura*-men, if God's mercy looks upon him, becomes new, a radiant child of the Lord.

[3]

The doors of darkness are three. They are the three gates of hell :—(1) lust; (2) anger or wrath; and (3) greed or avarice.

> Triple is the gateway of this hell, destructive of the self,—lust, wrath and greed. Therefore let men shun these three. [XVI. 21]

Lust (*kama*) is the desire for blind satisfaction of the senses. Anger or wrath or hate (*krodha*) is the desire to oppose those who stand in the way of the satisfaction of those desires. Greed or coveteousness (*lobha*) is the desire for inordinate accumulation of worldly goods.

The body is meant to be an instrument for the fulfilment of man's spiritual destiny. But if the body becomes the master, imposing its selfish demands on men, and so if sense-enjoyment becomes life's end, it is the beginning of the fall.

The world is meant to be an expression of divine glories,—service and love. But if the resources of the world, power and wealth, fail to serve and ennoble human life, and are accumulated and used for selfish purposes,—for increase of your personal power and exploitation of others,—then you may be sure you are on the downward path. You are descending into hell.

And when you are on the path of lust or greed, be sure you will be opposed by some, for you are on the wrong road : you are going against the Law Eternal. And, when opposed, you burst into wrath, you hate or brutally attack them that oppose you, you may be sure you are bound fast in bondage : you have advanced far into hell.

To win release from the gates of darkness, the gates of hell, man must turn away from the promptings of desire and turn to the holy law (*shastra-vidhi*). The holy law of the *shastras* (scriptures) shows what is right and what is wrong. So, Arjuna, let your mind be illumined by the light of the *shastras* and, knowing the *shastra-vidhi*,—the accumulated wisdom of the ages,—go forth to do thy earthly task.

> He, who having cast aside the holy law (*shastra-vidhi*, the scriptural law), followeth the impulsion of desire,—he attaineth not to perfection, nor true happiness, nor the highest goal.
>
> Therefore, let the holy law be thy rule in determining what should be done or what should not be done. Knowing what hath been declared by the holy law, do thou, O Arjuna, thy work in this world. [XVI. 23, 24]

CHAPTER XVII

Three Kinds of Faith

[1]

Is it necessary to know the holy laws of which the *shastras* (scriptures) speak ?

The laws work, whether you *know* them or not. The laws include love, compassion, truth. They take you, step by step, to realisation,—whether you know them or not. Only be true to yourself. You may not *know* the *shastras* : you must *act* in obedience to the laws.

Arjuna is afraid of the fate of the man who is ignorant of the laws, yet leads his life well, offering worship with *shraddha* (faith). And Arjuna asks the Master:—

> Those who, neglecting the holy law (the scriptural law), offer sacrifices filled with faith,—what is their condition, O Krishna? Is it one of *sattva* or *rajas* or *tamas?*
>
> [XVII. 1]

Arjuna must not be afraid of the fate of such a man. That man obeys the laws, without knowing it. What matters is obedience to the laws, in action,—not a *shastric* knowledge of them. That man is true to himself in daily life : and it is well with him.

Shraddha or faith is the man. Even as is the character of his *shraddha* or faith, so is he. Faith represents the man. Faith of one kind or another is the very principle of action.

And faith or *shraddha* of mortals is of three kinds,—*sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*. According to a man's nature is his faith. *Shraddha* is born of the nature of man : and a man is, as his faith is. He is what he believes and reveres. A man's faith makes his character.

> The faith of mortals, born of their nature, is of three kinds,—*sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*. Hear thou of these.
>
> According to a man's nature is his faith, O Arjuna ! Man is fashioned by his faith : as his faith is, so he is.
>
> [XVII. 2, 3]

Sattvic shraddha is the faith of purity. It is the faith of those who worship God or the gods. Pure men, men of purity and knowledge, worship God or the gods and go to the gods after death : they ultimately attain to wisdom or *nirvana*.

Rajasic shraddha is the faith of energy. It is the faith of men of energy, of passion and desire, of them who want power, wealth, success. They worship *yakshas* (demi-gods; gods of wealth) and *rakshasas* (demons).

Tamasic shraddha is the faith of darkness. It is the faith of the dull, ignorant, selfish, impure, sensual, dark folk. They worship ghosts and wandering spirits of the dead or nature spirits (*pretas* and *bhutas*,—evil forces).

> Men of purity worship the gods; men of passion worship *yakshas* and *rakshasas*; and others,—men of darkness,—worship ghosts and wandering spirits. [XVII. 4]

[2]

Worship reflects faith or *shraddha*. And if a man offers worship unsanctioned by the *shastras* (scriptures), he follows a demoniac discipline and goes astray. Thus there be men whose worship takes the form of dreadful self-mortification: it is a worship which tortures the body (Krishna's temple). Such a worship is full of desire and passions. And if the man thinks he knows his duty better than the *shastras*, his worship is "egoistic." It is filled with self-conceit.

> The men who practise dreadful austerities, not sanctioned by the scriptures, who are given to hypocrisy and egoism and are carried away by the force of desire and passion,
>
> Such men are witless. They torment the group of elements in their body and Me who dwells in the body. Know these to be demoniac in their resolves. [XVII. 5, 6]

[3]

The food a man takes corresponds to his character which is made by faith. And as faith is of three kinds, so is food.

(1) *Sattvic* food is of *sattvic* men or men of purity. *Sattvic* food promotes integrity, intelligence, intellectual brightness, strength, vigour, health, pleasure of physical and mental life, cheerfulness, delight, joy of living. *Sattvic* foods are palatable, savoury, sweet, juicy, nourishing and agreeable. They are foods such as wheat, rice, green beans, dairy products (butter, etc.) fruits, vegetables, etc.

(2) *Rajasic* food is that of passionate men,—men of energy, worldly-minded, fighting men. These foods are bitter, sour, salted, over-hot, pungent, dry and biting. e.g., opium, tobacco, tamarind, chillies, parched grain, rye, etc. They produce pain, grief and sickness.

(3) *Tamasic* food is dear to "dark" men, the evil-minded ones. They seek foods which are not freshly cooked, which are putrid, tasteless, stale, unclean, corrupt, foul, kept overnight. They are foods such as meat, fish, onions, eggs,

flesh, pickles, liquor, remains of food eaten by others.

> The foods which prolong life and promote purity, strength, health, joy and cheerfulness, which are sweet, soft, nourishing and agreeable, are liked by *sattvic* men.
>
> The foods that are bitter, sour, salted, over-hot, pungent, dry and burning, and which produce pain, grief and disease are liked by the *rajasic* men.
>
> That which is stale, tasteless, putrid, rotten, unclean, is the food liked by the *tamasic* men. [XVII. 8-10]

You must eat *sattvic* food, for it purifies the heart. Pure or *sattvic* food is the product of honest work. If you eat food purchased with ill-gotten money or received as a gift from a person who is not honest, you are not eating *sattvic* food. Man is what he eats,—says a German proverb. Mind is a product of the food you eat. So be careful. Eat food cooked by one whose magnetism is pure. The right persons to feed you are mother, wife, daughter, sister, guru. And mentally offer your food as an *ahuti* to the Lord : then your food will give you strength for work and service. And when you are eating, see that the atmosphere around you is peaceful. Don't eat in the midst of noises.

[4]

The sacrifice, too, corresponds to the man's character. So there are three kinds of sacrifices.

(1) *Sattvic* sacrifice is offered as a duty, trusting in God and the holy law, and with no desire for reward or fruit or selfish gain. This sacrifice is offered because it is in accord with the law, not with a view to profit.

(2) *Rajasic* sacrifice is insincere being offered for the sake of displaying wealth and power and earning fame. It is offered with a view to fruit.

(3) *Tamasic* sacrifice is devoid of faith, is contrary to scriptural laws.

Sacrifice is *sattvic* (pure), when it is offered in accordance to the holy law, by men who have no desire for reward, and who believe firmly that sacrifice is a duty.

Sacrifice which is offered with a view to fruit or for the sake of display, know that sacrifice to be *rajasic* (passionate), O Arjuna!

Sacrifice which is not in conformity with the holy law, in which no food is distributed, no *mantras* are recited and no gifts are offered, which is empty of faith, is said to be *tamasic* (dark). [XVII. 11-13]

[5]

Austerity or penance (*tapas*), too, reveals the man's character and is of three kinds. *Tapas* is of body or speech or mind.

Tapas of body : this includes reverent prostration to gods and great ones, true Brahmins, teachers and the wise.

This *tapas* is revealed, also, in such qualities as purity or cleanliness of body, straight-forwardness, harmlessness and continence. Continence is *brahmacharya*. The body must be freed from the lusts of the flesh. Therefore, the body should be treated with hardness. Mortify the senses : strip them of what tempts them to go astray. Keep them away from luxury, concupiscence, unruly desires. The body should be chastised and trained to obey the divine law.

Tapas of speech : this demands observance of truthfulness, kind and helpful words, freedom from spitefulness or argumentativeness, and *svadhyaya*, i.e., recitation of God's Name and sacred books.

Tapas of mind : this includes (1) keeping the mind cheerful and composed, in serenity and tranquility. (2) Gentleness or meekness. And meekness is not weakness. (3) Silence. This does not mean absolute solitude. Silence is being still, for some time, from your thoughts and desires and imaginations, and resting in the God within. Silence means taking off, for the time being, the strain and stress from your soul. (4) Control of mind, and (5) Purity of feeling. Do not indulge in vain speculations and idle thoughts. i.e., thoughts other than those relating to God. Keep the mind well-controlled and unsullied. As the body is cleansed by water, so the mind is purified by the thought of God.

> Worship of the gods, of the twice-born, of teachers and of the wise, purity, straight-forwardness, continence and harmlessness,—this is said to be the *tapas* (austerity) of the body.
>
> Speech that hurts no one, that is truthful, pleasant and beneficial, and the constant study of the sacred books,—this is said to be the *tapas* (austerity) of speech.
>
> Serenity of mind, gentleness, silence, self-restraint, purity of thought (and feeling),—this is called the *tapas* (austerity) of mind. [XVII. 14-16]

Sattvic tapas (austerity) is control of body, speech and mind with the utmost faith and without selfishness. *Rajasic tapas* aims at honour and respect, its motive is insincere, and is ostentatious. *Tamasic tapas* is self-torture or aims at doing harm to another.

> This threefold austerity is called *sattvic* (pure), when it is performed with supreme faith by men of balanced mind and with no desire for reward.
>
> Austerity which is performed for proud display and for the sake of gaining respect, honour and worship, they call *rajasic*; it is unstable and temporary.
>
> That austerity which is self-torture or which aims at doing harm to another, and which is performed by the

deluded mind, is declared to be *tamasic*. [XVII. 17-19]

Severe physical austerities do not help a man spiritually. They do not make for his *mukti* or liberation. They may lead to psychic or supernatural powers. And often psychic powers are an obstacle in the way of spiritual life, for they awaken vanity. Immoderate fasting or watching at night and torture of the body were never encouraged by the world's great teachers. Better by far than these harsh, ascetic penances is it to bear calmly the incidents of day-to-day living,—the crosses and contradictions, the sickness and sufferings which are a portion of our earthly life.

The test of true *tapas* is,—does it result in elimination of self-will, self-centred thinking, self-interest, selfish wishing and selfish imagining ? True *tapas* is at the farthest end of showy acts. In true *tapas* the man never thinks of "fruits" the man is non-attached to self-interest.

Interior mortification is necessary. Refuse consent to the suggestions of the senses. Let the will grow in strength and purity so as to overcome the flesh. Resist pleasure-suggestions and incentives. True *tapas* is spiritual mortification, is inward self-denial.

Not outward poverty but the spirit of poverty is necessary. It is the spirit of simplicity. You may have abundance, but you must not desire it. Or you may have anything but abundance : you may be ill-nourished and ill-clothed. But you must not cry for possession, you must not desire it ! So must you gradually learn to die to self.

The voice of true *tapas* is :—Discipline yourself until you renounce self-will, lose the ego-centric life. Let God alone be reflected in your body, your words and your mind. Therefore, be wholly empty. When you are empty, the Lord will fill you !

Gifts (*dana*), too, are of three kinds :—

(1) *Sattvic dana* is that which expects no return and takes account of place and time and fit recipient or worthy person.

(2) *Rajasic dana* is that which is made with desire for a return or fruit (such as honour, applause, business-success, *svarga*) or given with a grudging heart.

(3) *Tamasic dana* is that which takes no account of place or time and offers alms contemptuously or scornfully to unfit recipients.

> The gift which is given, from a sense of duty, to one from whom nothing in return is expected, and which is given in the right place at the right time to a deserving person,— such a gift is *sattvic* (pure).
>
> When a gift is given with a view to receiving something in return or with expectation of a future reward, or when it is given unwillingly,— such a gift is *rajasic* (passionate).
>
> The gift which is given at a wrong place or time or to an unworthy person, or with disrespect or contempt,— such a gift is *tamasic* (dark). [XVII. 20-22]

Dana is right giving. In this sense, adapting the words of Mahomed, to give water to the thirsty is *dana*, to remove stones and thorns from the wayside is *dana*, to smile in the presence of a brother who must be cheered is *dana*. So digging wells and erecting drinking-fountains and making roads and planting trees which give shade to travellers is *dana*. Is not *dana*, then, the true wealth of a man? As Mahomed says :— "When a man dies, mortals ask what property has he left behind him: but angels ask, what good deeds has he sent before him?" He who gives with a glad heart in *dana*, plants a tree which sends forth branches beyond the sky !

Dana, then, in its noblest form, is the pouring of your heart's sympathy upon God's creatures,—man and bird and beast. *Dana* is the gift that makes some human hearts happier, more blessed, that makes a corner of God's creation better, beautifuller.

[7]

Om Tat Sat,— are three mystic syllables used in the scriptures. Between them and the spiritual life of *yagna* (sacrifice), *tápas* (austerity) and *dana* (gift), there is an intimate connection.

Om Tat Sat,— is the three-fold designation of Brahman. "Om" expresses the absolute supremacy of Brahman. Brahman is Supreme: no speech may express Brahman. "Before the One, words recoil," says Shankara quoting from the Scripture. "Man can but apprehend, he cannot *comprehend* God!" The Supreme is infinitely incomprehensible. Every root-race has its sacred word. The word of the Aryan Race is "Om." Listen for it,— in the rustling wind and the roaring sea, in the murmur of the stream and the twinkling of the star, in the song of the birds and the clap of the thunder-storm, in the song of the *bhakta* and the ringing of the temple-bells. They all proclaim:— "Brahman is the Supreme." It is the Song of Creation. Chant it once, twice, thrice,— chant it seven times, if you are prepared for it. Chant "Om" and grow in the "practice of the presence of God." Chant "Om" in the measure in which your body is pure, your daily living is righteous, your aspiration is unselfish service, and your effort is meditation on Krishna!

"Tat" expresses the universality of Brahman. The Supreme is the Universal. The essence of Brahman, says Shankara, is Pure conciousness. "Tat" is Universal Consciousness. ""Meditate upon this Truth," says the

Teacher, "within your consciousness." This meditation makes for Liberation.

"Sat" expresses the Truth and Goodness of Brahman. Brahman is the Good. At the heart of things is a Divine Serenity, a Good Will, the Good! God is *That*. He is also a what,—the Good!

"Sat," also, means what is auspicious, productive of good results. All actions dedicated to Brahman, in which the ego is annihilated, are "Sat." All actions not dedicated to Brahman are *asat*, unreal.

> "Om Tat Sat,"—this is considered to be the threefold designation of Brahman. By this were ordained of old the Brahmins, the Vedas and the sacrifices.
>
> Therefore all acts of sacrifice, gift and austerity, enjoined in the scriptures, are always begun with the utterance of "Om" by the men who know Brahman.
>
> Those who seek liberation, being their acts of sacrifice, austerity and gift with the utterance of"Tat" ("That") without thought of reward.
>
> The word "Sat" is used in the sense of reality and goodness. Likewise, O Arjuna, the word "Sat" is used for praiseworthy action.
>
> Steadfastness in sacrifice, austerity and gift is also, called "Sat"; and so also action consecrated to That is called "Sat."
>
> Whatsoever is done without faith, whether it be offering (in sacrifice), gift or austerity, or anything else, is called *asat*, O Arjuna! Such work is of no value hereafter or here. [XVII. 23-28]

"Om Tat Sat" is Gita's *mantra*: its repetition is a sacramental act : it opens the door of grace. Christians and Buddhists, Muslims and Jews have also sacred words and formulas,— hallowed phrases,— which may become channels of spiritual power or *shakti*. Such words or verses or phrases guard us against bad influences or dark forces. Such words or phrases influence the subconscious mind. "Sat Nam," "God," "Love," "Krishna," "Christ" "Hare Ram," "Hari Bol," "Haq Maujud," "Rahman," Rahim," are words which, if repeated understandingly and devotionally, purify thoughts and feelings and induce selfless concentration of will. "The doors of the letters of the word," the Sufi says, "are opened and the soul passes into Reality." A repetition of these *mantras* awakes an integral intuition.

All sacrifices proceed from this one source,— Om Tat Sat. Begin all work with a repetition of Om, i. e., with prayer and invocation of God. No rite is valid unless it follows the *vidhi*, the law of the *shastras* (scriptures), and is referred over with faith to Om Tat Sat,— the Author of both the *shastra* and the *yagna*. With the utterance of "Om," begin all *yagna*, *tapas* and *dana*.

Whatever is wrought,— *yagna* or *tapas* or *dana*,— without the thought and utterance of this Name, " Om Tat Sat," without faith in God and the Law,— is *asat*, having neither reality nor goodness. Such work is of no value in this world and has no fruit of happiness hereafter. No action devoid of faith can be really beneficial. It serves no useful purpose, here or hereafter. Whatever you do, do it with faith in the Law of God.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Final Word

[1]

In the 18th chapter (*adhyaya*) of the Gita, Krishna tells Arjuna that true liberation is achieved through (1) courage and (2) selfless service. True *sanyasa* is inner renunciation of selfish desires. Pour your strength (*shakti*) as an offering, a sacrifice (*yagna*) on the altar of the universe. Renounce,—not all actions,—but all "desire-prompted" actions, if you aspire to the Highest.

The true *sanyasin* does not discard *all* action, but only selfish action. The true *sanyasin*, indeed, is a selfless server of humanity. He becomes what the Buddhist books call a "Bodhisatva", who forswears even the beautitude of "*Nirvana*", and whose prayer to the Lord of the world is :—"Not for me, O Lord, is the heaven-world, if there be even one heart, one mind in sorrow forlorn. Take me into *Nirvana* only after every little one, every lost one, every entangled one, is saved. Till such a time let me be left behind on this plane of suffering and pain, in service and sacrifice."

The true *sanyasin* rises above all separateness,—racial, political, economic, social, cultural, religious. Purified of all doubt, eliminating the "I", the "ego", beholding in all the One Eternal Spirit, he pours his life in the service of the Universe. In the Limitless he lives : and working in time, he abides in the Eternal.

In the very opening *sloka* of the 18th chapter, Arjuna puts the questions :—"What is the difference between *sanyasa* and *tyaga*?" And Sri Krishna proceeds to explain to Arjuna that *sanyasa* is renunciation of *kamya karma* i.e., deeds stained by selfish desire. But there are actions, such as eating, sleeping, etc., which the *sanyasin* does not, cannot renounce. Non-action, inertia, is *not* the ideal of the true *sanyasin*.

And what is *tyaga ? Tyaga* renounces all results,—the fruits of all actions. The *tyagi* does daily duties and does action aimed at helping society, but he does them in a spirit of dedication. The *tyagi's* are dedicated acts. So the *tyagi* does not renounce the three *paramarthik* acts :—*yagna* (sacrifice), *dana* (almsgiving) and *tapas* (austerity). He does acts which are for self-discipline or for social help. Such acts are not a bondage, but lead to liberation. Renunciation does not mean physical renunciation or forced withdrawal from the world and its activities. Renunciation is giving up selfish activities and coveting no fruits of other activities but converting them as offerings to God!

> The sages understand by renunciation (*sanyasa*) giving up of desire-prompted works; the giving up of the fruits of all actions is called relinquishment (*tyaga*) by the wise.
> [XVIII. 2]

Some philosophers, like the followers of Kapila (called Sankhyas), condemn all action, saying that action as such is impure, is stained with some measure of evil (*dosha*) and causes bondage and that, therefore, all action must be given up. But some others, called the Mimansakas, hold that there are acts such as sacrifice (*yagna*), austerity (*tapas*), and benevolent deeds (*dana*) : these should not be given up, for they purify the heart and they help on one's spiritual evolution.

> "Action should be given up as an evil," say some thoughtful men. "Acts of sacrifice, gift and austerity should not be given up," say others. [XVIII. 3]

What the Gita urges is that you must give up attachment to fruits of all actions. Practise virtue for the sake of virtue. He truly acts who acts without any thought of the fruits of action.

> Hear now, O Arjuna, My conclusion as to relinquishment. Relinquishment is declared to be three-fold.
>
> Deeds of sacrifice, almsgiving and austerity should not be given up, but should be performed. For sacrifice, almsgiving and austerity are purifiers of the wise.
>
> [XVIII. 4, 5]

Yagna or worship or sacrifice is duty to God : *dana* or alms or deeds of gifts are duties to the teachers and to society : *tapas* or penance or austerity is a duty to oneself. To renounce any one of these three duties would never be a spiritual act. Perform these three, in a *sattvic* way, with true *tyaga*, and you will purify your heart.

Even such acts of gifts and penance and *yagna* must be impersonally done, all gain renounced, all attachment eliminated.

> But even these actions should be done, leaving aside attachment and fruit. This, O Arjuna, is My decided and final view.
>
> [XVIII. 6]

Actions should not be renounced, but they should be dedicated to God and *lokasangraha* (welfare of humanity). What is essential is to renounce all thought of desire, all thought of self, "I". If you will not renounce, *kama* (desire) will awake : it is inherent in the mind and the senses. . . .

How to get rid of *kama* or desire? There is the Freudian school. It says :—Make friends with desire : gratify the senses. No; we see that desire flares up by gratification : gratification is to the senses what *ghee* (*clarified butter*) is to fire. Then, there is the ascetic school. It says :—Supress desire. No; suppression becomes expression.

The right way to get rid of *kama* or desire is *abhyasa*, is meditation, is constant dwelling on the idea that the way of the senses is anything but the way of peace. Gratification means grief. Gradually, pacify the mind through the power of understanding. Gradually, let the mind understand that neither ascetic suppression nor Freudian gratification conquers passion. Develop the perceptive power of understanding : then you will notice a marvellous change in you. Your purified senses, your disciplined mind, then, may contact objects, undisturbed : then all objects cool ! Then the light shines : no smoke then, but illumination ! The man of true *tyaga* moves in the world, desireless, passionless, a centre of inspiration and illumination to those who come within his radius of influence.

[2]

Renunciation of obligatory works and daily duties (actions prescribed as duties in the scriptures) is improper. *Dana*, *tapas* and *yagna* are prescribed duties : they are not a source of bondage, for they purify. They must not be renounced. Such renunciation springs from *moha* (delusion).

Tyaga is threefold,—*tamasic*, *rajasic* and *sattvic*. True *tyaga* is *sattvic* : it is *tyaga* of attachment and fruit. In *tamasic tyaga*, the man is dominated by *moha*, delusion, ignorance, attachment. *Tamasic tyaga* is of the dark type.

Thus, Antony renounced his career in Rome on account of his *moha* for Cleopatra. A man had a good job : he left it to be with a woman in another town : he had *moha* for the woman.

> Verily, renunciation of actions which are ordained is not right. Such renunciation through ignorance is declared to be *tamasic* (dark). [XVIII. 7]

Rajasic tyaga does not lead to liberation (*mukti*), for in this *tyaga* you give up to avoid pain or trouble or strain.

> He who abstaineth from an action as troublesome, or from fear of physical suffering, does *rajasic tyaga*. And he obtaineth not any benefit from such *tyaga* (relinquishment). [XVIII. 8]

True *tyaga* is *sattvic* : it is *tyaga* of attachment and fruit. In true *tyaga* you take up what duty bids you do. You perform action prescribed by the scriptures, but unmoved by gain : you act impersonally. You do an act, because it is due. You do duties for duty's sake : you renounce all egotism and all attachment and all fruits.

> He who performs a prescribed action, O Arjuna, because it ought to be done, giving up attachment and also the fruit,—that *tyaga* is regarded as *sattvic* (pure). [XVIII. 9]

The *sattvic tyagi* (renouncer) hates no humble or unpleasant tasks, nor is he attached to agreeable, pleasant, lofty tasks. He hath cut asunder all doubts. He feels towards his work no emotion of repulsion and none of attachment. He does his task as a duty. Is the duty unpleasant? He does not hate it. Is the duty pleasant ? He is not attached to it. He accepts life ungrudgingly. So is the teaching reaffirmed :—"Arjuna! play your part faithfully and courageously. Neither grieve nor glory! Submit to the Will of God!

For His Will alone is fulfilled, not yours!"

The wise man who is pervaded by *sattva* (purity), whose doubts are cut asunder,—such a renouncer neither hateth unpleasant action nor is attached to agreeable action. [XVIII. 10]

The *sattvic tyagi* is the true *tyagi* : he is a true *sanyasin*, too. He accepts the unpleasant and the pleasant as ordained by the Will of God.

He does not worry about the fruit of action. He does his duty, disregarding fruit, knowing that duty, well discharged, paves the way for liberation and illumination. He does his duty, setting the Law, the Wheel in motion. Arjuna! do your duty and the Law will operate : leave the results to God's Wisdom,—i.e., the Law. Trust in God and the Law.

True *tyaga* is not non-doing of action, but non-attachment to fruits. The true *tyagi* is he who gives up fruit, not work. He who has no desire for fruit, he is *akarta*. He is like the tree on the river-side : its fruit goes to him who wants it. The renouncer does not go into the wheel of birth and death.

[3]

Sri Krishna indicates the five causes or causative conditions of action :—

The first is *adhishthanam*, the seat, the place, the dwelling home of the *jiva* or desires, the physical body.

The second is *karta*, agent. Who is he? The *jiva*, personality, the empirical ego. Associating with *prakriti* (matter), the *jiva* forgets its original Form, the *atma-svarupa*, and becoming egoistic, says :—"I am the doer." This egoism must be given up, if freedom or liberation is to be achieved.

The third is *karanam* or instruments or organs. They are the ten *indriyas* (senses), and *manas*, *buddhi*, *ahankara*.

The fourth is *cheshta*, efforts, functions of *prana* or vital energies or breaths in the body.

The fifth is *daivam*, providence, destiny, the non-human realm that influences human effort and results. *Daivaṁ* is the world-will at work,—the regulator of all work.

These, then, are the five "instrumental" causes of every act, good or bad.

> Learn of Me, O Arjuna, these five causes, for the accomplishment of all action, as declared in the Sankhya doctrine.
>
> The seat of action (the body), the agent, the various organs, the diverse kinds of efforts, and providence, being the fifth.
>
> Whatever action a man undertakes by his body, speech and mind, whether right or wrong,—these five are the cause thereof.
>
> That being so, the man of perverse mind who, on account of his untrained understanding, looks upon himself as the sole agent (or actor),—verily he seeth not!
>
> [XVIII. 13-16]

He who thinks his own self is the only agent of all his actions,—he is egoistic, he is ignorant and too blind to see the truth. He fails to see.

He who is not egoistic may slay, yet he kills not : for he is unfettered by selfish thought.

Arjuna may kill the Kurus, but if he is untainted by ego, he does not slay them : though he slay these thousands, he is no slayer.

> He who is free from the egoistic notion, whose *buddhi* (understanding) is not sullied, though he slay these people, he slayeth not, nor is bound (by his actions).
>
> [XVIII. 17]

He, who is above the thought, "I am the agent," who has realised that the Atman, the Self, transcends the mind, and whose understanding is untainted by the desire for the fruition of actions, he cannot be blamed nor praised for any action.

Does intention, then, alone determine the morality of an actor? Does the spirit alone count in our estimate of the ethics of work? The Gita points out that these two are essential to right action :—(1) freedom from egoism, and (2) unstained understanding.

[4]

An action has 2 causes :—(1) subjective and (2) objective.

The subjective refers to the stimuli to action, i.e.,the impetu before the action is done, the subtle conception that exists in the mind first which is, afterwards, translated into physical transformations. This is called *Karmachodana*. It consists of (1) knowledge, (2) the thing known, and (3) the knower.

The objective refers to *karmasangraha*. When an action is performed, it has its three concomitant factors :—(1) *karana*, i.e., instruments or the senses; (2) subject of action, i.e. *karta*, the agent; and (3) object of action, *karma* itself, the end, the purpose aimed at.

Karmachodana is mental planning and *karmasangraha* is the actual execution.

> Knowledge, the object of knowledge (the thing known), the knowing subject (the knower), are the threefold stimulus to action. The instrument, the action, and the agent are the threefold assemblage of action. [XVIII. 18]

[5]

Pure (*sattvic*) knowledge is perception of the One Essence in all. This One is :—(1) *avyayam*, imperishable, deathless; and (2) *avibhaktam*, entire, inseparate.

The One in the rich and the poor; the One in the good and the criminal, in the saint and the sinner; the One in all *jivas*. The *jiva* is immortal, though residing, for sometime, in the mortal coil; and the *jivas* have their differences, yet all are identical in their essential, spiritual nature. This knowledge is true knowledge,—is *sattvic*.

> Knowledge, action and the actor are declared, in the science of the *gunas* (Sankhya philosophy), to be of three kinds only, according to difference in *gunas* (qualities). Hear thou duly of these also.
>
> The knowledge by which the One Imperishable Being is seen in all beings,—inseparate in the separated,— know thou that knowledge as pure (*sattvic*). [XVIII. 19, 20]

Rajasic knowledge sees the many as many. It knows nothing but difference.

Rajasic knowledge is knowledge of *nama* (name) and *rupa* (form), not of the Essence. It is knowledge of the earthen vessel but not of the Earth out of which it is made, knowledge of the lamp but not of the Light which shineth therein, knowledge of the cloth but not of the thread.

Rajasic knowledge, by differentiation, sees all creatures as separate and distinct.

Rajasic knowledge sees that *jivas* in different bodies,—heavenly, human or sub-human,—are different, one from the other, sees that the *jivas* have their quantitative and qualitative differences.

> The knowledge which sees multiplicity of beings in many creatures, all various, each apart from his fellow,—that knowledge know thou as *rajasic* (passionate).
>
> [XVIII. 21]

Tamasic knowledge is false, baseless. It sees a single, small object as though it were the whole. A man clings to a form or a woman in *moha* (attachment), as though it were God; a man thinks that his family is the whole world; a man is attached to his village or his country as the world; such a man has *tamasic* knowledge.

> While that knowledge which clings to one single effect (or small object) as if it were the whole, without looking at the cause, without grasping the Real (*tatva*), and narrow,— that is declared to be *tamasic* knowledge. [XVIII. 22]

The man who is attached to eating and other gross physical enjoyments, regarding them as the be-all and end-all of life, has *tamasic* knowledge.

Such knowledge is false, irrational, worthless, baseless.

Knowledge of the Atman is *sattvic*; knowledge of *nyaya* or logic, concerned with differences and distinctions, is *rajasic*; knowledge which is secular and deals with matters physical and mental and is not made an offering to the Lord, is *tamasic*.

[6]

Sattvic action,—pure, right,—is action which is (1) obligatory (such as earning livelihood or when a mother looks after her child) or enjoined by sages or scriptures (such as *yagna*, *tapas*, *dana*);

(2) devoid of attachment or sense of doership, i.e., without egoism;

(3) done without a desire for fruit or gain; and

(4) performed passionlessly or impersonally, for duty, not for desire nor hate.

> An action which is obligatory, which is devoid of attachment, which is done without a desire for fruit and

which is performed without love or hate (*raga* or *dvesha*), —that is called *sattvic* (pure). [XVIII. 23]

Rajasic acts are vain, passionate. They have the following marks :—

(1) They are done in despite of nature, "against the grain," in great strain, stress or exertion.

(2) They are done under the whip of lust (*kama*) or desire (for woman, wealth, position, power, property, office).

(3) They are impelled by the will of the ego, *ahankara*, sense of self, self-conscious pride, self-conceit, egotistic vanity.

> But that action which is done under great strain by one who seeks to gratify his desires, and is prompted by *ahankara* (sense of self),— is declared to be *rajasic* (passionate). [XVIII. 24]

Tamasic action has the following marks :—

(1) It is undertaken in the hour of delusion, of personal attachment or mental aberration, by the worldly-minded.

(2) It is done without count of cost, squandering strength and treasure of fame and power, and heedless of harm to another.

(3) And the man who does it does not consider his power to perform it. It is a reckless act done without regard to one's human capacity,—done even if the act tends to self annihilation.

> The action which is undertaken from delusion (*moha*), without regard to consequences,—to loss and injury (to others),—and without regard to one's capacity,—that is declared to be *tamasic* (dark). [XVIII. 25]

[7]

The *sattvic* doer is the man who truly acts. He is impersonal. He is without conceit. In good or evil hap, he is the same.

The true man of action whom the world awaits has the following marks :—

(1) He acts without desire. He has no attachment to action or its fruits. He covets no honour, no earthly greatness.

(2) He is void of vanity. He does not boast of his doings. He does not say :—"I am the doer," "I am the agent." There is no egoism in his speech. He never says :—"Without me the thing was impossible."

(3) He is full of patience and courage. In the midst of obstacles, he remains resolute, ardent, enduring.

(4) He is *sama*, balanced in gain and loss, in pleasure and grief. Untouched by triumph, he remains in failure untroubled.

> The doer who is free from attachment, whose speech is devoid of egotism, who is full of resolution and zeal, and who is unchanged by success or failure,—he is called *sattvic karta* (pure or rightful doer). [XVIII. 26]

The marks of him who is a *rajasic karta*, a doer with desire, are:—

(1) He is sunk in worldly *vasanas*, attached to sense-objects.

(2) He is moved by lust of gain. He is anxious for fruits, is hot for the prize of vainglory.

(3) He is greedy.

(4) He is brutal : his nature would embarrass others, cause them pain.

(5) In triumph he is too quick to rejoice, and in failure despairing.

> He who is swayed by passion, who seeks the fruit of his actions, who is greedy, harmful, impure, who is swayed by joy and sorrow,—he is pronounced a *rajasic* doer. [XVIII. 27]

The *tamasic* doer is erratic and uncultured in intellect. His heart is not in his action. He is stupid and stubborn. He is a cheat, and he is malicious. He is a lover of delay : he ever puts off. And he is easily dejected. The *tamasic* agent, then, works with every evil quality.

> He who is unbalanced, vulgar, stubborn, deceitful, malicious, indolent, despondent, and procrastinating,—he is called a *tamasic* doer. [XVIII. 28]

[8]

There are three kinds of *buddhi*, understanding or insight or conscience or discernment. And there are three kinds of *dhriti*, determination or steadfastness of will.

The two, *buddhi* and *dhriti*, are closely connected with action. *Buddhi* perceives what shall be done and *dhriti* brings the perception to its fulfilment in action. *Buddhi* is discernment, the power that discriminates. Solomon asked for discrimination, when he prayed :—"Give me understanding!"

> Hear thou, O Arjuna, related fully and severally, the threefold division, according to the three *gunas*, of *buddhi* (understanding) and *dhriti* (steadiness). [XVIII. 29]

The *sattvic buddhi*, conscience or discrimination, knows when you must go forth in action and when you should withdraw or renounce action; knows acts fit or right and unfit or wrong: knows what you should fear or not fear, what binds and what liberates.

> The *buddhi* which knows *pravritti* (right action) and *nivritti* (right cessation of action),—what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, what should be feared and what should not be feared, what work binds and what brings release,— that *buddhi*, O Arjuna, is *sattvic* (pure). [XVIII. 30]

The *rajasic buddhi* is influenced by *rajas*, and so is confused in judging right and wrong : it mistakes in matters of right and duty. The *sattvic buddhi* is not confused and does not make mistakes. The *rajasic buddhi*, under the influence of *rajas*, sometimes confounds duty with pleasure, right with wrong. The *rajasic buddhi* sees values awry, not as they are.

> That by which one knows awry,— erroneously,— *dharma* and *adharma* (the right and the wrong, what should be done and what should not be done,— that understanding, O Arjuna, is *rajasic*. [XVIII. 31]

Tamasic buddhi reverses all values, perverts all values. It imagines evil to be good : for conscience is, then, thickly wrapped in ignorance, in darkness, and mistakes wrong for right.

Tamasic buddhi is sunk in infatuation and knows not what is righteousness and what is unrighteousness. *Tamasic buddhi* takes a selfish view of moral issues and is without light, is based on darkness. To a man of *tamasic buddhi*, *satsang* is wrong, and to propagate atheism is praiseworthy. He regards worship of God as an old superstition. To preach or spread atheism he regards as bearing witness to truth.

> That which is enwrapped in darkness, thinketh *adharma* (wrong) to be *dharma* (right), and seeth all things perverted,—that understanding, O Arjuna, is *tamasic*. [XVIII. 32]

Determination (*dhriti*) is will-power. The will that is *sattvic* or pure (1) is fixed or unwavering; (2) is strengthened by concentration or the practice of yoga; and (3) controls the activities of the mind, the life-breaths, and the senses.

The *sattvic* will controls the mind-activity directed to knowledge of nature's forces. By *sattvic* will is secured thought-control. The *sattvic* will controls, too, our actions so that we ask for nothing in return : we act in sympathetic compassion.

Pure will disciplines mind, breath and the senses and takes them in the right path. The mind does not wander : the vibrations, *prana*, are steadied : the senses are held under restraint.

> The determination which is unwavering, which through yoga or concentration controls the activities of the mind, the life-breaths and the senses,— that, O Arjuna, is *sattvic* determination. [XVIII. 33]

Rajasic determination is in pursuit of reward. It is a personal gain-greedy will. It is the determination whereby a man holds to (1) virtue, duty or custom, (2) desire, and (3) wealth or property for the love of gain or personal advantage.

> The determination by which one, desiring the fruit, holdeth fast to *dharma* (duty), *kama* (pleasure) and *artha* (wealth),— that determination, O Arjuna, is *rajasic* (passionate). [XVIII. 34]

The *tamasic dhriti* is pig-headed will. It is obstinacy. Such a man stubbornly refuses to shake off his fear, grief, dullness, low spirits or vanity.

The *tamasic* determination lingers in drowsiness and recklessness.

The man of *tamasic dhriti* is in pursuit of sloth and lust and similar unworthy objects.

> That determination by which one, from stupidity, does not give up (excessive) sleep, fear, grief, depression and arrogance,— O Arjuna, is *tamasic* (dark). [XVIII. 35]

[9]

Sattvic joy ariseth out of self-realisation or vision of the Self. *Sattvic* joy is attained after long experience.

These, then, are the three marks of *sattvic sukha* :—

(1) it is attained after *abhyasa*, practice, i.e., practice of *bhajan*, *dhyana* and *puja*; (2) it is bitter as poison at the start and in the period of self-discipline, but sweet as nectar in the end; and (3) it springeth out of no outer knowledge or outer objects, but out of clear and unclouded understanding : it is born of no *vishaya bhoga* but of the inner serenity of the soul.

Sattvic joy is *ananda*, the bliss of self-realisation. It is tranquillity of the soul, is wisdom which liberates.

> And now hear from Me, O Arjuna, the three kinds of joy. That in which one, by practice, rejoices and which putteth an end to his sorrow,
>
> Which appears like poison at first but in the end is as nectar, and which springs from a clear understanding of the Atman (Self),—that joy is said to be *sattvic* (pure).
>
> [XVIII. 36, 37]

The *rajasic* joy is pleasure. Sweet as *amrita* (nectar) at first, it turns bitter as poison : it is sense-pleasure. Socrates spoke of the "pleasure of wisdom" : he meant the "joy of wisdom." The *rajasic* man seeks wisdom in pleasure, and is, soon or late, disappointed. He pursues pleasure and then finds that pleasure devitalises, resulting in physical depression and moral degeneration. He who gorges himself in haste, repents at leisure! Such a man has made desire his deity. He spends his time in drinking and revels in the enjoyment of female society, in feasts and luxuries.

> That which from the contact of the senses and their objects (*vishayas*) is, at first, as nectar, but in the end is like poison,—that *sukha* (pleasure) is accounted *rajasic* (passionate.)
>
> [XVIII. 38]

Tamasic pleasure is utterly delusive : it deadens the soul. Its beginning and its end alike are delusions.

To the man who drowns himself in *tamasic* pleasure, man is but a natural product,—a kind of matter. He is a slave to sloth. He is a victim to foolishness, ignorance, confusion which bewilders the soul.

> That pleasure which both at first and in its consequence misleads the soul and which arises from sleep, sloth and heedlessness,—that pleasure is declared to be *tamasic* (dark). [XVIII. 39]

[10]

The influence of the three *gunas* is universal : not one is free from the three *gunas*.

> There is not a being, either on earth or again among the gods in heaven, that is freed from the three *gunas* (qualities), born of *prakriti* (nature). [XVIII. 40]

Svabhava or nature of each is really previous *karma* in past incarnation. Each one of these four *varnas* (orders) is influenced by the predominant *guna* (quality) in its nature, and works according to that influence. Duties of each *varna* are determined by its *guna* in predominance or *svabhava*. *Varna*-duty is derived from *prakriti* or matter. Each *varna* is to its own duty born.

> Of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, O Arjuna, the activities have been prescribed, according to the qualities born of their own natures. [XVIII. 41]

Sattva prevails in the Brahmin; *rajas* prevails in the Kshatriya, and next to *rajas* are *sattva* and *tamas*; in the *Vaishya*, *rajas* and *tamas* prevail, *sattva* coming last; in the Shudra, the *tamas* predominates, next to it is *rajas* and next to it, *sattva*.

In Atman, we all are one,—one in our spiritual essence, one in eternity and in destiny, one in the Homeland of the Spirit. But in *prakriti*, we are different : and the four *varnas* are made by *prakriti*.

All the four are sons of God : but treasure is distributed among the four.

The actions of the four orders (*varnas*) are due to the three *gunas*, as one or the other of them is more or less : but there is no competition between them, no sense of separation, no thought of superior or inferior. *Mukti* (liberation) is open to all, if they act without *kama* or desire, in *nishkama bhava*, in a spirit of dedication to the Lord.

Svabhava is *sanskaras* due to the *karmas* of earlier *janmas* (births). According to *sanskara* is produced, in the *antah-karana*, the predominance of the *sattva, rajas or tamas guna*; and on account of different *gunas*, there are four different *varnas*.

Four orders function to keep the life of the nation healthy and strong,—the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya, the Shudra.

But the heart of the nation is the true Brahmin. Not wealth, not armies, not economic planning, but the life of the ordinary citizen makes the nation. If he be loose in morals, weak in knowledge, devoid of aspirations, the nation gradually sinks. The Brahmin is the teacher of the citizens and keeps them on a noble level of life. And if the Brahmin has the seeing power, if the Teacher is, also, the Seer, he saves the nation from many a pitfall.

> Serenity, self-restraint, austerity, purity, forbearance and uprightness, wisdom, knowledge and faith,—these are the duties of the Brahmin, born of his own nature.
> [XVIII. 42]

True Brahmins are the seers, true Kshatriyas are the guardians,—the warriors ready to die for peace and progress of the country. They are men of prowess, courage : they are fearless : they are ready to be killed, if that would bring peace. No money tempts them. They are unafraid warriors of *dharma*. In them is the hope of the race.

> Bravery, vigour, steadiness, resourcefulness, not fleeing in a battle, generosity, and leadership (the ruler-nature),—these are the duties of a Kshatriya, born of his own nature.
> [XVIII. 43]

Such a warrior was Bhishma. When Yuddhishthira says to Krishna :—"Master! I am Thy disciple. Teach me!" Krishna says to him :—"Go to Bhishma." And Bhishma expounds to him the great truth :—"Where Krishna works, there is *dharma* (righteousness) : where *dharma* functions, there is victory."

The true Kshatriya the warrior of light, builds his life in *dharma* : he is bold in battle : he faces fire : and he has the "ruler-nature" (*ishvara bhava*), and so knows how to control the people.

He wields political power, but power does not corrupt him.

The Brahmin aims at self-realisation, the Kshatriya at social justice and national advance. The Brahmin is a teacher and a seer : the Kshatriya is a leader.

A Vaishya's duty, nature-sprung, is three-fold :—(1) husbandry, cultivation; (2) cattle-raising, cattle-breeding; and (3) trade.

A Shudra is a labourer. The duty, nature-sprung, of the labour class is menial work. The true Shudra works for all men.

The duties and qualities of a Vaishya are of a *rajas-tamas* nature. Cultivation of the soil or farming, keeping herds of cattle, and carrying on trade, i.e., buying and selling, are the natural duties of a Vaishya.

To serve the first three orders is the duty of him who is a Shudra by nature.

> Ploughing the soil, protection of cattle, and trade,—are the duties of a Vaishya, born of his own nature. Action of the character of service,—is the duty of a Shudra, born of his own nature.
> [XVIII. 44]

Classification of *varnas* or orders is thus based on the natural qualities of a man. The four orders are not based on birthright.

Is the Gita's classification democratic ? I do not know. The basis of democracy is "rationality of a majority." Does the Gita recommend the modern method of decision by majority of votes? I do not think so. Decision belongs to a few. The majority have their own spheres, their own gifts. If the State is to be built and developed on right lines, each one of the four orders must bring its gifts as contribution to the common weal. There is neither great nor small to him who would be a helper of the State. All work is noble : all efforts are useful. Do not eliminate differences : differences make harmony. He who tills the soil or rears the cattle or carries on a trade or digs the earth is as useful, as necessary as he who fights for the State or governs it, or meditates in a quiet corner. Co-operation of all is needed if the society is to remain healthy and strong. All men have not the same nature nor is every nature equal in its capacities to every other. But all men are necessary for society. A healthy, progressive society aims at a harmony, an integration of all orders.

The Gita is careful to point out that man finds perfection (God-realisation) by being devoted to his own duty. Man's duty is the work which is natural to him.

When he dedicates all his natural actions together with their fruits to the Lord Supreme, he gradually attains to the perfect state.

No matter how humble the task, it becomes a window to glimpse the Supreme, if offered as a sacrifice to Him.

Duty is *svakarma* : and *svakarma* leads to *siddhi* (perfection). Cling to your own work,—for which nature has fitted you. Do not shirk your own duty. Toil on, and you will win the Supreme. Toil on ! Do your work in the spirit of true *tyaga*, as an offering to the Lord and without thought of reward, and you will attain! Live up to your *svakarma*, and you will win perfection.

Through worship wrought by work, you reach the Supreme. Do your duty as an act of worship to the Lord who prompts all action.

From Him flows the tide of creation : and He hath spread in space all that is. In worship, then, vow your work to Him, and attain ! Let your works be as the pavement of the Path that leads to God.

> Man reacheth perfection, by each being devoted to his own duty. Listen thou how perfection is won by him who is devoted to his own duty.
>
> He from Whom is the arising (emanation) of all beings and by Whom all this (creation) is pervaded,—by worshipping Him through doing his own duty, doth man attain perfection. [XVIII. 45, 46]

Don't neglect your duty for any other task, however superior it may seem. And your duty is that in which your *svabhava*,—nature,—finds expression. Let nature work in you : and it will be well with you. Never abandon your own duty. Let the shoemaker mind his work and not abandon it for the work of a politician. So will he be led on to *moksha* (liberation). In doing his duty, however humble, he will not be bound by action : his work will be as no-work. And an humble shopkeeper may live nearer the true life than a famous statesman.

Do not abandon your duty, though its performance be imperfect, as indeed it must be : every work is tainted with some blemish, some shortcoming, as new-kindled fire is wrapped in smoke. For some time, indeed, every task will be done imperfectly. Go on with it ! Do not renounce it for another which you may for sometime, indeed, do better.

Action is always defective, in the beginning. For your natural duty is yours, according to your nature and your qualities. Go on doing your duty, however imperfectly, at the start ! So will you purify your heart and draw nearer to the Divine Source.

> Better is one's own *dharma*, though devoid of merits, than the well-executed *dharma* of another. He who doeth the *dharma* (duty), ordained by his own nature (*svabhava*), incurreth not sin.
>
> Innate duty, O Arjuna, though defective, should not be abandoned. For all undertakings are clouded by defects, as fire is beclouded by smoke. [XVIII. 47, 48]

[11]

Through action is reached the perfection of actionlessness. This perfection is freedom,—from bondage of *karma*. This perfection is God-realisation.

Here are the three stages in the ascent to perfection :— (1) In the first stage, the man renounces his self, ego, "I". (2) In the second stage, he renounces all fruits of action. (3) In the third stage, he abandons all idea of a sense of duty : he renounces all his *karma*. He is self-mastered : he attains the power of perfect actionlessness. He reaches union with Brahman, the Supreme Spirit, who is beyond all action.

> He whose *buddhi* (understanding) is everywhere unattached, who has subdued his self, whose desire has fled,—he goeth by renunciation to the Supreme Perfection named *naishkarmya* (freedom from work). [XVIII. 49]

In this *sloka*, *sanyasa* (renunciation) is used as equivalent to *tyaga* (abandonment of desire).

Naishkarmya is not *akarma*; *naishkarmya* is absence of actions which create bonds.

[12]

Sri Krishna now indicates to Arjuna how the aspirant, after practise or *abhyasa* of selfless *karma*, attains to Brahman, the realisation of the Self. The different stages in self-realisation are as follows:—

(1) The first stage is to attain knowledge through selfless *karma*.

(2) Then follows devotional service unto the Lord.

In attaining knowledge through selfless *karma*, the aspirant (1) develops pure understanding and pure will, free from delusions, and so does not indentify his body with the Atman; (2) turns away from all sense-enjoyment of sound, sight and touch; (3) learns self-control and so rises above earthly likes and dislikes, love and hate; (4) grows in love of solitude and subjective retirement; (5) eats but little and only light, *sattvic* foods, sleeps and talks but little; (6) is restrained in body, mind and tongue; (7) is absorbed in meditation on Truth, on God or *Soham*; (8) eradicates passion and prejudice and takes refuge in desirelessness, detachment (*vairagya*); (9) is free from ambition, mineness, vanity, force, pride, ego-sense, lust and anger; and (10) is peaceful, tranquil of heart,—kind, unselfish, mild, compassionate.

Thus qualified, the aspirant is able to realise Brahman, to become one with the Eternal, one with his own True Self. He is ready for oneness with Brahman. He becomes the Supreme Spirit, God in God !

> Endowed with pure understanding, firmly controlling himself, turning away from sound and other objects of sense, and casting aside attraction (*raga*) and aversion (*dvesha*);
>
> Dwelling in solitude, eating but little, controlling speech, body and mind, ever absorbed in the yoga of meditation, taking refuge in dispassion;
>
> Casting aside "mineness," force (violence), arrogance,

> desire (lust), possession, selfless, and peaceful,—he is fit to become one with Brahman. [XVIII. 51-53]

The aspirant, who is thus transformed to Brahman, grieves for nought and longs for nought. His sheaths have grown pure. He is freed from bondage. He is happy in himself. He has a calm vision. And of equal heart to all that lives, his love, devotion, is supreme to Me,—the All-Self : his *bhakti* transcends the three qualities of *maya*.

His *bhakti* truly begins after God-realisation. Thus, after winning Brahman, the Spirit, he is united in devotion with Krishna.

> Having become one with Brahman, serene in the spirit, he grieveth not, nor desireth. Regarding all beings as alike, he obtaineth supreme devotion unto Me. [XVIII. 54]

To become Brahman is to love Krishna : to love Krishna is to know Him, how wonderful He is, what is His real Nature, what are His transcendental qualities and deeds. And to know is to enter into His Life. And this knowledge cometh through selfless *karma-yoga*.

> By devotion he knoweth Me, what My measure is and who I am in essence; then, having known Me in essence, he forthwith entereth into That, the Supreme. [XVIII. 55]

So the climax, the consummation of the realisation is love, is *bhakti*, *prema*. To "enter into the Lord" does not mean "self-annihilation" : it means the freedom of the *jiva*, the soul, from his earthly bondages, and attainment of his transcendental Nature, which is a likeness, *rupa*, of the Divine Self, the Real Self of Krishna. To "enter into the Lord" is to become His Image, His Likeness. And as He is Love, to enter into Him is to love Eternal Love unendingly.

To love Krishna is to know Him, His innermost Nature, The truth that He is. Through this Knowledge-Love, the soul enters into His Being.

Through loving devotion, the soul dwells in Krishna until death and eternally after death.

[13]

Krishna sums up His doctrine of *karma*, *gnana* and *bhakti*. Krishna's *bhakta* need not fight shy of *karma*. Let him do what work he will, his *bhakti* and Krishna's grace will break all bonds of *karma*.

The *bhakta* takes refuge in the Lord, and so converts *kamya* into *nishkama karma*. Though ever at work, in every way, the *jiva*, through *bhakti* and grace, dwells at perfect rest in Krishna's eternal State. For all he does is offered to Him in utter surrender : His Grace is upon him, and he finds, and dwells in, the Eternal.

> Doing continually all actions whatsoever, taking refuge in Me, by My Grace he obtaineth the eternal, undying abode. [XVIII. 56]

This, then, is the triple thought emphasised :—(1) By selfless *karma-yoga* is the *jiva* led on to knowledge or *gnana*. (2) By *gnana-yoga* does he advance to *bhakti*. (3) By *bhakti*, pure *bhakti*, *prema*, he enters into Krishna.

By a triple process may the Lord be worshipped :—(1) *nishkama karma*, selfless activity; (2) *sarnagati*, taking shelter in the Lord, even with a selfish motive, dedicating all secular duties to Him; and (3) *prema-bhakti*, love divine.

Arjuna ! mentally resign all thy actions to Me, and turn thy mind and heart to Me in all thy activities.

Think mentally that you are no more than an agent of God, regarding Him as the one Supreme End, and ever fix your mind on Him, Practise the *buddhi-yoga*, the yoga of equanimity or wisdom, not the yoga called *hatha-yoga*, and so despise not the world but live in it, till your *karma* is exhausted and drops down of its own accord, as falls a wreath of flowers from off the neck of an elephant.

Be one with the Lord in will, in heart, in consciousness.

> Surrendering in thought all action to Me, regarding Me as the Supreme, taking refuge in *buddhi-yoga*, the yoga of discrimination, do thou fix thy thought ever on Me. [XVIII. 57]

The *jiva* must meditate on Krishna and lose the thought of individual agency. He who renounces his ego, him the grace of Krishna helps on to success. But he who, in self-conceit, listens not to Krishna,—he shall perish.

> Thinking on Me, thou shalt cross over all obstacles by My Grace. But if, from egoism, thou wilt not listen (to Me), thou shalt perish. [XVIII. 58]

Salvation or self-destruction,—the choice is yours. If you choose salvation, follow Krishna : if you choose destruction, trust yourself ! You may defy the Lord : but you cannot long resist the Will Divine. You will fall : you will perish !

If you wrongly identify yourself with your body and your mind and cling to your perverted "ego" and think yourself to be the "doer" or "master" of what happens in the world, then you will fall. And drawn away from the Divine Source, you will bring ruin upon yourself. Pride goeth before a fall ! In union with the Lord is success and achievement.

The fall of the *jiva* is due to disobedience or revolt against God's Will. The *jiva*'s spiritual evolution is retarded : this is his fall.

You may, in your vanity, say ever so much :—"I will not fight!" Your own nature will drive you to the act. For you yourself have created the *karma* that binds you : you are helpless in its power. And you will do that very thing which your vanity would not. The nature of the Kshatriya will make thee fight ! The natural instincts thou wilt not overpower.

> If, entrenched in egoism, thou thinkest, "I will not fight," know that thy resolve is vain. Nature will constrain thee !
>
> O Arjuna, bound by thine own acts, born of thine own nature,—that which, through delusion, thou wishest not to do, even that helplessly thou shalt perform.
>
> [XVIII. 59, 60]

The right way to evolve spiritually is to give the heart to God. Then the *karmas* will gradually adjust themselves and may assume a devotional character. Even a yogi cannot at once rise above his own nature.

"Bound by thy own *karmas*, born of thine own nature" : this is not the paralysis of initiative but the cosmic sense of continuity : you cannot shirk what nature has traced for you. You will do involuntarily! *Karma* must be done under *prakriti's* constraint. Your work was born when you were born, and you are bound to do it.

The Lord, who is in the heart of every thing created, whirls all creatures round and round,—held fast on His wheel of *maya*.

A wire-puller pulls the puppets from behind the screen by wires : so *maya* (God's power) pulls, drives the *jivas*, imprisoned in gross bodies, to dance as *maya* wills, in conformity with the dictation of the Lord within. He is the Inner Monitor. Arjuna, He propels thy *prakriti* (natural proclivity) to stimulate thee to fight as a result of thy *karmas* in previous births. The Efficient Cause is the Lord seated within : *maya* is the natural cause : the *jivas* are held on the wheel of *maya* and made to dance this way or that as puppets. *Prakriti* makes each one as a puppet to play his part. As puppets the *jivas* dance and are in bondage. So all creatures are compelled to work by the magic-machine of *maya*.

In the universal wheel of Time, the *Ishvara*, the Lord, the Master, causes the destined deeds of *karma* to be performed. All beings revolve as though mounted on a potter's wheel. The Master is the Regulator, not blind Fate or Chance.

> The Lord dwelleth in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna, causing them to revolve by *maya* (His power), as if they were mounted on a machine. [XVIII. 61]

Take refuge utterly in the Lord. Do not trust your lower self, which expresses itself in ambition, desire, etc. By His grace,—contacting with the Supreme Being and transformed into His likeness, an Image of the Infinite,—you will gain the Supreme Peace, your Eternal Home.

> Flee unto Him for shelter with all being, O Arjuna ! By His grace thou shalt obtain Supreme Peace,—the Eternal Abode.
>
> Thus hath wisdom, more secret than secrecy itself, been declared to thee by Me. Reflect on it fully and do as thou choosest. [XVIII. 62, 63]

Here, then, is Krishna's appeal to Arjuna. Carefully consider what has been told you, and then act as you will!

The knowledge of the realisation of Brahman through selfless *karma* is a secret. And another secret is regarding Krishna, the Indwelling Monitor, who regulates and whose *maya* makes us dance as puppets. Take refuge, then, in Krishna.

The wisdom is profound, but feel free to accept it or not.

> Listen thou again to My supreme word, the most secret of all. Well-beloved art thou of Me, therefore shall I speak for thy good. [XVIII. 64]

In the "supreme word" is the essence of the Gita : it is the essence of yoga.

> Fix thy mind on Me; be devoted to Me; sacrifice to Me; prostrate thyself before Me. So shalt thou come to Me. I pledge thee My troth; thou art dear to Me ! [XVIII. 65]

Arjuna is very dear to Krishna. So the Lord tells Arjuna about this pure *bhakti*. By giving your whole heart to Krishna, by loving and adoring Him, worshipping Him always, and bowing to Him in reverence, you will find Him,—the Lord of life and destiny !

Mind, heart, sacrifice, reverence,—must all be directed to Krishna. Arjuna must be a true yogi and so must be God-minded, devoted to Him, working for Him, bowing down to God alone, not the world.

> Abandoning all duties, come unto Me alone for shelter. Grieve not! I shall liberate thee from all sins. [XVIII. 66]

In this *sloka* is indicated the supreme secret which Krishna indicates to His beloved disciple and which is the spiritual wisdom of the Sages of India.

"Abandon all *dharmas*" enjoined by the *shastras*, i.e., do not waste time in idle discussions regarding systems of caste and stations of life and rigid austerities, etc., and subtle points of *dharma-shastras* in metaphysic and ethics. Lay down all duties in Me,—your Refuge. The true *jignasu* (seeker) must surrender his heart and soul to God. And God will liberate the *jignasu* from sins or limitations. Arjuna must not grieve : for all duties are relative. I shall save you through *bhakti*, devotion.

In the lower stage to which the *jiva* has fallen, he has to conform to physical, mental and moral duties, to laws, customs, usages, to austerities, to techniques of *dhyana* (meditation), etc. But he has no further need of these duties, etc., when, through *bhakti*, his normal health is recovered. Be not a slave to duties, to virtues, to principles.

Take refuge or shelter in the Eternal Beauty and Supreme Joy of Krishna through *bhakti* or love divine and transcend duties.

Bhakti, then, is the most esoteric principle, and *prema* or love is the secret of secrets, the final aim of all *jivas*. Be a *bhakta*, Arjuna! Take shelter in His Love! *Bhakti*, surrender, is the way, the surest way to the Lord. Go to Him naked, in unreserved surrender.

The School of Ramanuja regards this verse as the carama *sloka*, the final verse, the summing up of the Gita.

Abandon set duties : how? Work, but in abandonment to Krishna as the Refuge.

This holy truth of the Gita must not be told to those who are given up to worldly pleasures, who lack in devotion, who do not serve the Supreme Lord and His creatures, nor to those who cavil at spiritual ideals and are indifferent to the Teacher and despise Krishna.

The Gita is not to be taught to the sensuous and the scoffers. Do not cast pearls before swine. Teach the Gita only to those who have the qualifications of discipline, devotion and service. Others will not understand the Teaching, will even misunderstand it and, by misusing it, do more harm than good.

> Never is this to be spoken by thee to anyone who is not austere in life, nor to one without devotion, nor to one who desireth not to listen, nor yet to him who speaketh ill of Me. [XVIII. 67]

[14]

The services of him who, unselfishly and reverently, teaches the divine wisdom of the Gita to others are the greatest; for he helps others to cross the *sansara* and reach the Eternal Home.

> He who declares this supreme secret to My devotees, showing the highest devotion for Me,—he, without doubt, shall come to Me.
>
> Nor is there any among men who does dearer service to Me than he. Nor shall there be another dearer to Me on earth than he. [XVIII. 68, 69]

A study of this supreme classic is worship of God. Who studies the Gita gives to the supreme Truth a rich offering.

> And he who shall study this sacred dialogue of ours, by him shall I be worshipped with the sacrifice of knowledge. So I hold. [XVIII. 70]

He who merely hears this great classic with faith, he, in the course of time, becomes a *mukta*, obtains freedom,—not from rebirth but from sins which stand in the way of *bhakti* or devotion. When freed from the body, such a man obtains the happy worlds of men of holy deeds.

The Gita is a Scripture which destroys delusion. Doubt destroys. Listen to the Gita! You will reach the heaven of the righteous.

> And the man who, full of faith and without scoffing, merely heareth it, even he, freed (from evil), shall obtain the radiant worlds of the righteous. [XVIII. 71]

In the next *sloka*, Krishna asks Arjuna whether His teaching has destroyed his doubts.

> Has this been heard by thee, O Arjuna, with one-pointed mind? Has thy *moha* (delusion), caused by *agnana* (ignorance), been destroyed, O Arjuna?
> [XVIII. 72]

> Arjuna says :—
> Destroyed is my delusion. I have gained recognition through Thy grace, O Krishna! I am firm, my doubts have fled. I shall act according to Thy word. [XVIII. 73]

At last, Arjuna is ready to do the bidding of his Master. Arjuna's doubts are ended, and his mind stands firm. Light has come to him : *smriti*, recognition, is come to him of the true nature of the Atman, of the knowledge of essential Truth. Remembrance of the holy wisdom now dawns upon him. The veil of illusion is removed. He has recovered lost memory, and now remembers that a *jiva* is His eternal servant. A *jiva*-soul's highest place is at His holy Feet : a *jiva*'s highest wisdom is surrender to the Divine Spirit. Arjuna has received wisdom and says :—"I will now obey!"

So it ever is. When the *jiva* knows,— his egoism gone, illusions destroyed, doubts dispelled,—he hears the small voice of God within him and acts, as an instrument of God.

[15]

In the concluding section, Sanjaya says to King Dhritarashtra:—

> Thus I heard this marvellous dialogue of Vasudeva (Krishna) and the great-souled Partha (Arjuna), causing my hair to stand on end. [XVIII. 74]

Sanjaya speaks these words to the blind King Dhritarashtra. Sanjaya says, he has repeated to the King the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna, as he heard it.

Sanjaya says he heard the Gita from the very lips of Krishna. He heard the Gita not with these earthly ears : but, by the mystic grace of Vyasa, he learnt the yoga supreme from the Master of Yoga !

> By the grace of Vyasa, I heard this supreme secret, this yoga taught by Krishna Himself, the Lord of Yoga,— speaking before me. [XVIII. 75]

As Sanjaya remembers the sacred and wonderful truths that Krishna told to Arjuna, Sanjaya rejoices, again and again.

> Remembering, remembering this marvellous and holy dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, O King, I thrill with joy, again and again !
>
> Remembering, remembering, also, that most marvellous form of Krishna, great is my wonder, O King, and I thrill with joy, again and again ! [XVIII. 76, 77]

How wondrous and sweet the Form of Sri Krishna ! My joy is limitless : it increases at every moment.

> Wherever is Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, wherever is Arjuna, the archer, assured are there prosperity, victory, welfare and *neeti* (righteousness or morality). [XVIII. 78]

Krishna represents yoga : Arjuna represents energy. In the union of the two is victory, welfare, prosperity, progress and righteousness.

Sri Krishnarpanam astu
Shubham Bhavatu

To the Blessed Krishna be homage!
May there be happiness everywhere!

Thus the Bhagavad Gita-Upanishad hath ending.

PEACE BE TO ALL BEINGS!

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